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Wives and Daughters.

AN EVERY-DAY STORY.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A FLUKE, AND WHAT CAME OF IT.



HE honour and glory of having a lover of her own was soon to fall to Molly's share; though to be sure it was a little deduction to the honour that the man who came with the full intention of proposing to her, ended by making Cynthia an offer. It was Mr. Coxe, who came back to Hollingsford to follow out the purpose he had announced to Mr. Gibson nearly two years before, of inducing Molly to become his wife as soon as he should have succeeded to his uncle's estate. He was now a rich, though still a red-haired, young man. He came to the George Inn, bringing his horses and his groom; not that he was going to ride much, but that he thought such outward signs of his riches might help on his suit; and he was so justly modest in his estimation of himself that he believed that he needed all extraneous aid. He piqued himself on his constancy; and indeed, considering that he had been so much restrained by his duty, his affection, and his expectations to his crabbed old uncle, that he had not been able to go much into society, and very rarely indeed into the company of young ladies, such fidelity to Molly was very meritorious, at least in his own

eyes. Mr. Gibson too was touched by it, and made it a point of honour to give him a fair field, all the time sincerely hoping that Molly would not be such a goose as to lend a willing ear to a youth who could never remember the difference between apophysis and epiphysis. He thought it as well not to tell his wife more of Mr. Coxe's antecedents than that he had been a former pupil; who had relinquished (all that he knew of, understood) the medical profession because an old uncle had left him enough of money to be idle. Mrs. Gibson, who felt that she had somehow lost her place in her husband's favour, took it into her head that she could reinstate herself if she was successful in finding a good match for his daughter Molly. She knew that her husband had forbidden her to try for this end, as distinctly as words could express a meaning; but her own words so seldom did express her meaning, or if they did, she held to her opinions so loosely that she had no idea but that it was the same with other people. Accordingly she gave Mr. Coxe a very sweet and gracious welcome.

"It is such a pleasure to me to make acquaintance with the former pupils of my husband. He had spoken to me so often of you that I quite feel as if you were one of the family, as indeed I am sure that Mr. Gibson considers you."

Mr. Coxe felt much flattered, and took the words as a happy omen for his love-affair. "Is Miss Gibson in?" asked he, blushing violently. "I knew her formerly, that is to say, I lived in the same house with her, for more than two years, and it would be a great pleasure to—to—"

"Certainly, I am sure she will be so glad to see you. I sent her and Cynthia—you don't know my daughter Cynthia I think, Mr. Coxe? she and Molly are such great friends—out for a brisk walk this frosty day, but I think they will soon come back." She went on saying agreeable nothings to the young man, who received her attentions with a certain complacency, but was all the time much more engaged in listening to the well-remembered click at the front door,—the shutting it to again with household care, and the sound of the familiar bounding footstep on the stair. At last they came. Cynthia entered first, bright and blooming, fresh colour in her cheeks and lips, fresh brilliance in her eyes. She looked startled at the sight of a stranger, and for an instant she stopped short at the door, as if taken by surprise. Then in came Molly softly behind her, smiling, happy, dimpled; but not such a glowing beauty as Cynthia.

"Oh, Mr. Coxe, is it you?" said she, going up to him with an outstretched hand, and greeting him with simple friendliness.

"Yes; it seems such a long time since I saw you. You are so much grown—so much—well, I suppose I must not say what," he replied, speaking hurriedly, and holding her hand all the time rather to her discomfiture. Then Mrs. Gibson introduced her daughter, and the two girls spoke of the enjoyment of their walk. Mr. Coxe marred his cause in that very first interview, if indeed he ever could have had any chance,

by his precipitancy in showing his feelings, and Mrs. Gibson helped him to mar it by trying to assist him. Molly lost her open friendliness of manner, and began to shrink away from him in a way which he thought was a very ungrateful return for all his faithfulness to her these two years past, and after all she was not the wonderful beauty his fancy or his love had painted her. That Miss Kirkpatrick was far more beautiful and much easier of access. For Cynthia put on all her pretty airs—her look of intent interest in what any one was saying to her, let the subject be what it would, as if it was the thing she cared the most about in the whole world; her unspoken deference; in short, all the unconscious ways she possessed by instinct of tickling the vanity of men. So while Molly quietly repelled him, Cynthia drew him to her by her soft attractive ways; and his constancy fell before her charms. He was thankful that he had not gone too far with Molly, and grateful to Mr. Gibson for having prohibited all declarations two years ago. For Cynthia, and Cynthia alone, could make him happy. After a fortnight's time, during which he had entirely veered round in his allegiance, he thought it desirable to speak to Mr. Gibson. He did so with a certain sense of exultation in his own correct behaviour in the affair, but at the same time feeling rather ashamed of the confession of his own changeableness which was naturally involved. Now it had so happened that Mr. Gibson had been unusually little at home during the fortnight that Mr. Coxe had ostensibly lodged at the George—but in reality had spent the greater part of his time at Mr. Gibson's house—so that he had seen very little of his former pupil, and on the whole he had thought him improved, especially after Molly's manner had made her father pretty sure that Mr. Coxe stood no chance in that quarter. But Mr. Gibson was quite ignorant of the attraction which Cynthia had had for the young man. If he had perceived it he would have nipped it in the bud pretty quickly, for he had no notion of any girl, even though only partially engaged to one man, receiving offers from others if a little plain speaking could prevent it. Mr. Coxe had asked for a private interview; they were sitting in the old surgery, now called the consulting-room, but still retaining so much of its former self as to be the last place in which Mr. Coxe could feel himself at ease. He was red up to the very roots of his red hair, and kept turning his glossy new hat round and round in his fingers, unable to find out the proper way of beginning his sentence, so at length he plunged in, grammar or no grammar.

"Mr. Gibson, I daresay you'll be surprised, I'm sure I am at—at what I want to say; but I think it's the part of an honourable man, as you said yourself, sir, a year or two ago, to—to speak to the father first, and as you, sir, stand in the place of a father to Miss Kirkpatrick, I should like to express my feelings, my hopes, or perhaps I should say wishes, in short——"

"Miss Kirkpatrick?" said Mr. Gibson, a good deal surprised.

"Yes, sir!" continued Mr. Coxe, rushing on now he had got so far.

"I know it may appear inconstant and changeable, but I do assure you, I came here with a heart as faithful to your daughter, as ever beat in a man's bosom. I most fully intended to offer myself and all that I had to her acceptance before I left ; but really, sir, if you had seen her manner to me every time I endeavoured to press my suit a little—it was more than coy, it was absolutely repellent, there could be no mistaking it,—while Miss Kirkpatrick——" he looked modestly down, and smoothed the nap of his hat, smiling a little while he did so.

"While Miss Kirkpatrick——?" repeated Mr. Gibson, in such a stern voice, that Mr. Coxe, landed esquire as he was now, felt as much discomfited as he used to do when he was an apprentice, and Mr. Gibson had spoken to him in a similar manner.

"I was only going to say, sir, that so far as one can judge from manner, and willingness to listen, and apparent pleasure in my visits—altogether I think I may venture to hope that Miss Kirkpatrick is not quite indifferent to me,—and I would wait,—you have no objection, have you, sir, to my speaking to her, I mean ?" said Mr. Coxe, a little anxious at the expression on Mr. Gibson's face. "I do assure you I have not a chance with Miss Gibson," he continued, not knowing what to say, and fancying that his inconstancy was rankling in Mr. Gibson's mind.

"No ! I don't suppose you have. Don't go and fancy it is that which is annoying me. You're mistaken about Miss Kirkpatrick, however. I don't believe she could ever have meant to give you encouragement !"

Mr. Coxe's face grew perceptibly paler. His feelings, if evanescent, were evidently strong.

"I think, sir, if you could have seen her—I don't consider myself vain, and manner is so difficult to describe. At any rate, you can have no objection to my taking my chance, and speaking to her."

"Of course, if you won't be convinced otherwise, I can have no objection. But if you'll take my advice, you will spare yourself the pain of a refusal. I may, perhaps, be trenching on confidence, but I think I ought to tell you that her affections are otherwise engaged."

"It cannot be !" said Mr. Coxe. "Mr. Gibson, there must be some mistake. I have gone as far as I dared in expressing my feelings, and her manner has been most gracious. I don't think she could have misunderstood my meaning. Perhaps she has changed her mind ? It is possible that, after consideration, she has learnt to prefer another, is it not ?"

"By 'another,' you mean yourself, I suppose. I can believe in such inconstancy" (he could not help, in his own mind, giving a slight sneer at the instance before him), "but I should be very sorry to think that Miss Kirkpatrick could be guilty of it."

"But she may—it is a chance. Will you allow me to see her ?"

"Certainly, my poor fellow"—for, intermingled with a little contempt, was a good deal of respect for the simplicity, the unworldliness, the strength of feeling, even though the feeling was evanescent.—"I will send her to you directly."

"Thank you, sir. God bless you for a kind friend!"

Mr. Gibson went upstairs to the drawing-room, where he was pretty sure he should find Cynthia. There she was, as bright and careless as usual, making up a bonnet for her mother, and chattering to Molly as she worked.

"Cynthia, you will oblige me by going down into my consulting-room at once. Mr. Coxe wants to speak to you!"

"Mr. Coxe?" said Cynthia. "What can he want with me?"

Evidently, she answered her own question as soon as it was asked, for she coloured, and avoided meeting Mr. Gibson's severe, uncompromising look. As soon as she had left the room, Mr. Gibson sat down, and took up a new *Edinburgh* lying on the table, as an excuse for conversation. Was there anything in the article that made him say, after a minute or two, to Molly, who sat silent and wondering?—

"Molly, you must never trifle with the love of an honest man. You don't know what pain you may give."

Presently Cynthia came back into the drawing-room, looking very much confused. Most likely she would not have returned if she had known that Mr. Gibson was still there; but it was such an unheard-of thing for him to be sitting in that room in the middle of the day, reading or making pretence to read, that she had never thought of his remaining. He looked up at her the moment she came in, so there was nothing for it but putting a bold face on it, and going back to her work.

"Is Mr. Coxe still downstairs?" asked Mr. Gibson.

"No. He is gone. He asked me to give you both his kind regards. I believe he is leaving this afternoon." Cynthia tried to make her manner as commonplace as possible; but she did not look up, and her voice trembled a little.

Mr. Gibson went on looking at his book for a few minutes; but Cynthia felt that more was coming, and only wished it would come quickly, for the severe silence was very hard to bear. It came at last.

"I trust this will never occur again, Cynthia!" said he, in grave displeasure. "I should not feel satisfied with the conduct of any girl, however free, who could receive marked attentions from a young man with complacency, and so lead him on to make an offer which she never meant to accept. But what must I think of a young woman in your position, engaged—yet 'accepting most graciously,' for that was the way Coxe expressed it—the overtures of another man? Do you consider what unnecessary pain you have given him by your thoughtless behaviour? I call it thoughtless, but it is the mildest epithet I can apply to it. I beg that such a thing may not occur again, or I shall be obliged to characterize it more severely."

Molly could not imagine what "more severely" could be, for her father's manner appeared to her almost cruel in its sternness. Cynthia coloured up extremely, then went pale, and at length raised her beautiful appealing eyes full of tears to Mr. Gibson. He was touched by that

look, but he resolved immediately not to be mollified by any of her physical charms of expression, but to keep to his sober judgment of her conduct.

"Please, Mr. Gibson, hear my side of the story before you speak so hardly to me. I did not mean to—to flirt. I merely meant to make myself agreeable,—I can't help doing that,—and that goose of a Mr. Coxe seems to have fancied I meant to give him encouragement."

"Do you mean that you were not aware that he was falling in love with you?" Mr. Gibson was melting into a readiness to be convinced by that sweet voice, and pleading face.

"Well, I suppose I must speak truly." Cynthia blushed and smiled —ever so little—but it was a smile, and it hardened Mr. Gibson's heart again. "I did think once or twice that he was becoming a little more complimentary than the occasion required; but I hate throwing cold water on people, and I never thought he could take it into his silly head to fancy himself seriously in love, and to make such a fuss at the last, after only a fortnight's acquaintance."

"You seem to have been pretty well aware of his silliness (I should rather call it simplicity). Don't you think you should have remembered that it might lead him to exaggerate what you were doing and saying into encouragement?"

"Perhaps. I daresay I'm all wrong, and that he is all right," said Cynthia, piqued and pouting. "We used to say in France, that 'les absens ont toujours tort,' but really it seems as if here——" she stopped. She was unwilling to be impertinent to a man whom she respected and liked. She took up another point of her defence, and rather made matters worse. "Besides, Roger would not allow me to consider myself as finally engaged to him; I would willingly have done it, but he would not let me."

"Nonsense. Don't let us go on talking about it, Cynthia! I have said all that I mean to say. I believe that you were only thoughtless, as I told you before. But don't let it happen again." He left the room at once, to put a stop to the conversation, the continuance of which would serve no useful purpose, and perhaps end by irritating him.

"Not guilty, but we recommend the prisoner not to do it again. It's pretty much that, isn't it, Molly?" said Cynthia, letting her tears downfall, even while she smiled. "I do believe your father might make a good woman of me yet, if he would only take the pains, and was not quite so severe. And to think of that stupid little fellow making all this mischief! He pretended to take it to heart, as if he had loved me for years instead of only for days. I daresay only for hours if the truth were told."

"I was afraid he was becoming very fond of you," said Molly; "at least it struck me once or twice; but I knew he could not stay long, and I thought it would only make you uncomfortable if I said anything about it. But now I wish I had!"

"It would not have made a bit of difference," replied Cynthia. "I

knew he liked me, and I like to be liked; it's born in me to try to make every one I come near fond of me; but then they should not carry it too far, for it becomes very troublesome if they do. I shall hate red-haired people for the rest of my life. To think of such a man as that being the cause of your father's displeasure with me!"

Molly had a question at her tongue's end that she longed to put; she knew it was indiscreet, but at last out it came almost against her will.

"Shall you tell Roger about it?"

Cynthia replied, "I have not thought about it—no! I don't think I shall—there's no need. Perhaps, if we are ever married——"

"Ever married!" said Molly, under her breath. But Cynthia took no notice of the exclamation until she had finished the sentence which it interrupted.

"——and I can see his face, and know his mood, I may tell it him then; but not in writing, and when he is absent; it might annoy him."

"I am afraid it would make him uncomfortable," said Molly, simply. "And yet it must be so pleasant to be able to tell him everything—all your difficulties and troubles."

"Yes; only I don't worry him with these things; it is better to write him merry letters, and cheer him up among the black folk. You repeated 'Ever married,' a little while ago; do you know, Molly, I don't think I ever shall be married to him? I don't know why, but I have a strong presentiment, so it's just as well not to tell him all my secrets, for it would be awkward for him to know them if it never came off!"

Molly dropped her work, and sat silent, looking into the future; at length she said, "I think it would break his heart, Cynthia!"

"Nonsense. Why, I am sure that Mr. Coxe came here with the intention of falling in love with you—you need not blush so violently. I am sure you saw it as plainly as I did, only you made yourself disagreeable, and I took pity on him, and consoled his wounded vanity."

"Can you—do you dare to compare Roger Hamley to Mr. Coxe?" asked Molly, indignantly.

"No, no, I don't!" said Cynthia in a moment. "They are as different as men can be. Don't be so dreadfully serious over everything, Molly. You look as oppressed with sad reproach, as if I had been passing on to you the scolding your father gave me."

"Because I don't think you value Roger as you ought, Cynthia!" said Molly stoutly, for it required a good deal of courage to force herself to say this, although she could not tell why she shrank so from speaking.

"Yes, I do! It's not in my nature to go into ecstasies, and I don't suppose I shall ever be what people call 'in love.' But I am glad he loves me, and I like to make him happy, and I think him the best and most agreeable man I know, always excepting your father when he is not angry with me. What can I say more, Molly? would you like me to say I think him handsome?"

"I know most people think him plain, but—"

"Well, I'm of the opinion of most people then, and small blame to them. But I like his face—oh, ten thousand times better than Mr. Preston's handsomeness!" For the first time during the conversation Cynthia seemed thoroughly in earnest. Why Mr. Preston was introduced neither she nor Molly knew; it came up and out by a sudden impulse; but a fierce look came into the eyes, and the soft lips contracted themselves as Cynthia named his name. Molly had noticed this look before, always at the mention of this one person.

"Cynthia, what makes you dislike Mr. Preston so much?"

"Don't you? Why do you ask me? and yet, Molly," said she, suddenly relaxing into depression, not merely in tone and look, but in the droop of her limbs—"Molly, what should you think of me if I married him after all?"

"Married him! Has he ever asked you?" But Cynthia, instead of replying to this question, went on, uttering her own thoughts.

"More unlikely things have happened. Have you never heard of strong wills mesmerizing weaker ones into submission? One of the girls at Madame Lefebre's went out as a governess to a Russian family, who lived near Moscow. I sometimes think I'll write to her to get me a situation in Russia, just to get out of the daily chance of seeing that man!"

"But sometimes you seem quite intimate with him, and talk to him—"

"How can I help it?" said Cynthia impatiently. Then recovering herself she added: "We knew him so well at Ashcombe, and he's not a man to be easily thrown off, I can tell you. I must be civil to him; it's not from liking, and he knows it is not, for I've told him so. However, we won't talk about him. I don't know how we came to do it, I'm sure: the mere fact of his existence, and of his being within half a mile of us, is bad enough. Oh! I wish Roger was at home, and rich, and could marry me at once, and carry me away from that man! If I'd thought of it, I really believe I would have taken poor red-haired Mr. Coxe."

"I don't understand it at all," said Molly. "I dislike Mr. Preston, but I should never think of taking such violent steps as you speak of, to get away from the neighbourhood in which he lives."

"No, because you are a reasonable little darling," said Cynthia, resuming her usual manner, and coming up to Molly, and kissing her. "At least you'll acknowledge I'm a good hater!"

"Yes. But still I don't understand it."

"Oh, never mind! There are old complications with our affairs at Ashcombe. Money matters are at the root of it all. Horrid poverty—do let us talk of something else! Or, better still, let me go and finish my letter to Roger, or I shall be too late for the African mail!"

"Is it not gone? Oh, I ought to have reminded you! It will be too late. Did you not see the notice at the post-office that letters for —

ought to be in London on the morning of the 10th instead of the evening. Oh, I am so sorry!"

"So am I, but it can't be helped. It is to be hoped it will be the greater treat when he does get it. I've a far greater weight on my heart, because your father seems so displeased with me. I was fond of him, and now he is making me quite a coward. You see, Molly," continued she, a little pitifully, "I've never lived with people with such a high standard of conduct before; and I don't quite know how to behave."

"You must learn," said Molly, tenderly. "You'll find Roger quite as strict in his notions of right and wrong."

"Ah, but he's in love with me!" said Cynthia, with a pretty consciousness of her power. Molly turned away her head, and was silent; it was of no use combating the truth, and she tried rather not to feel it—not to feel, poor girl, that she too had a great weight on her heart, into the cause of which she shrank from examining. That whole winter long she had felt as if her sun was all shrouded over with grey mist, and could no longer shine brightly for her. She wakened up in the morning with a dull sense of something being wrong—the world was out of joint, and, if she were born to set it right, she did not know how to do it. Blind herself as she would, she could not help perceiving that her father was not satisfied with the wife he had chosen. For a long time Molly had been surprised at his apparent contentment; sometimes she had been unselfish enough to be glad that he was satisfied; but still more frequently nature would have its way, and she was almost irritated at what she considered his blindness. Something, however, had changed him now: something that had arisen at the time of Cynthia's engagement; he had become nervously sensitive to his wife's failings, and his whole manner had grown dry and sarcastic, not merely to her, but sometimes to Cynthia,—and even—but this very rarely, to Molly herself. He was not a man to go into passions, or ebullitions of feeling: they would have relieved him, even while degrading him in his own eyes; but he became hard, and occasionally bitter in his speeches and ways. Molly now learnt to long after the vanished blindness in which her father had passed the first year of his marriage; yet there was no outrageous infractions of domestic peace. Some people might say that Mr. Gibson "accepted the inevitable;" he told himself in more homely phrase "that it was no use crying over spilt milk;" and he, from principle, avoided all actual dissensions with his wife, preferring to cut short a discussion by a sarcasm, or by leaving the room. Moreover, Mrs. Gibson had a very tolerable temper of her own, and her cat-like nature purred and delighted in smooth ways, and pleasant quietness. She had no great facility for understanding sarcasm; it is true it disturbed her, but as she was not quick at deciphering any depth of meaning, and felt it to be unpleasant to think about it, she forgot it as soon as possible. Yet she saw she was often in some kind of disfavour with her husband, and it made her uneasy. She resembled Cynthia in this; she liked to be liked; and she wanted to regain the esteem which

she did not perceive she had lost for ever. Molly sometimes took her stepmother's part in secret; she felt as if she herself could never have borne her father's hard speeches so patiently: they would have cut her to the heart, and she must either have demanded an explanation, and probed the sore to the bottom, or sat down despairing and miserable. Instead of which Mrs. Gibson, after her husband had left the room, on these occasions would say in a manner more bewildered than hurt—

"I think dear papa seems a little put out to-day; we must see that he has a dinner that he likes when he comes home. I have often perceived that everything depends on making a man comfortable in his own house."

And thus she went on, groping about to find the means of reinstating herself in his good graces—really trying, according to her lights, till Molly was often compelled to pity her in spite of herself, and although she saw that her stepmother was the cause of her father's increased astrin-gency of disposition. For indeed he had got into that kind of exaggerated susceptibility with regard to his wife's faults, which may be best typified by the state of bodily irritation that is produced by the constant recurrence of any particular noise: those who are brought within hearing of it, are apt to be always on the watch for the repetition, if they are once made to notice it, and are in an irritable state of nerves.

So that poor Molly had not passed a cheerful winter, independently of any private sorrows that she might have in her own heart. She did not look well, either; she was gradually falling into low health, rather than bad health. Her heart beat more feebly and slower; the vivifying stimulant of hope—even unacknowledged hope—was gone out of her life. It seemed as if there was not, and never could be in this world, any help for the dumb discordancy between her father and his wife. Day after day, month after month, year after year, would Molly have to sympathize with her father, and pity her stepmother, feeling acutely for both, and certainly more than Mrs. Gibson felt for herself. Molly could not imagine how she had at one time wished for her father's eyes to be opened, and how she could ever have fancied that if they were, he would be able to change things in Mrs. Gibson's character. It was all hopeless, and the only attempt at a remedy was to think about it as little as possible. Then Cynthia's ways and manners about Roger gave Molly a great deal of uneasiness. She did not believe that Cynthia cared enough for him; at any rate, not with the sort of love that she herself would have bestowed, if she had been so happy—no, that was not it—if she had been in Cynthia's place. She felt as if she should have gone to him both hands held out, full and brimming over with tenderness, and been grateful for every word of precious confidence bestowed on her. Yet Cynthia received his letters with a kind of carelessness, and read them with a strange indifference, while Molly sat at her feet, so to speak, looking up with eyes as wistful as a dog's waiting for crumbs, and such chance beneficences.

She tried to be patient on these occasions, but at last she must ask—"Where is he, Cynthia? What does he say?" By this time Cynthia had put down the letter on the table by her, smiling a little from time to time, as she remembered the loving compliments it contained.

"Where? Oh, I did not look exactly—somewhere in Abyssinia—Huon. I can't read the word, and it does not much signify, for it would give me no idea."

"Is he well?" asked greedy Molly.

"Yes, now. He has had a slight touch of fever, he says; but it's all over now, and he hopes he is getting acclimatized."

"Of fever!—and who took care of him? he would want nursing—and so far from home. Oh, Cynthia!"

"Oh, I don't fancy he had any nursing, poor fellow! One does not expect nursing, and hospitals, and doctors in Abyssinia; but he had plenty of quinine with him, and I suppose that is the best specific. At any rate, he says he is quite well now!"

Molly sate silent for a minute or two.

"What is the date of the letter, Cynthia?"

"I did not look. December the—December the 10th."

"That's nearly two months ago," said Molly.

"Yes; but I determined I would not worry myself with useless anxiety, when he went away. If anything did—go wrong, you know," said Cynthia, using an euphemism for death, as most people do (it is an ugly word to speak plain out in the midst of life), "it would be all over before I even heard of his illness, and I could be of no use to him—could I, Molly?"

"No. I daresay it is all very true; only I should think the squire could not take it so easily."

"I always write him a little note when I hear from Roger, but I don't think I'll name this touch of fever—shall I, Molly?"

"I don't know," said Molly. "People say one ought, but I almost wish I had not heard it. Please, does he say anything else that I may hear?"

"Oh, lovers' letters are so silly, and I think this is sillier than usual," said Cynthia, looking over her letter again. "Here's a piece you may read, from that line to that," indicating two places. "I have not read it myself for it looked dullish—all about Aristotle and Pliny—and I want to get this bonnet-cap made up before we go out to pay our calls."

Molly took the letter, the thought crossing her mind that he had touched it, had had his hands upon it, in those far-distant desert lands, where he might be lost to sight and to any human knowledge of his fate; even now her pretty brown fingers almost caressed the flimsy paper with their delicacy of touch as she read. She saw references made to books, which, with a little trouble, would be accessible to her here in Hollingford. Perhaps the details and the references would make the letter dull and dry to some people, but not to her, thanks to his former teaching and the interest he had excited in her for his pursuits. But, as he said in apology,

what had he to write about in that savage land, but his love, and his researches, and travels? There was no society, no gaiety, no new books to write about, no gossip in Abyssinian wilds.

Molly was not in strong health, and perhaps this made her a little fanciful; but certain it is that her thoughts by day and her dreams by night were haunted by the idea of Roger lying ill and unattended in those savage lands. Her constant prayer, "O my Lord! give her the living child, and in no wise slay it," came from a heart as true as that of the real mother in King Solomon's judgment. "Let him live, let him live, even though I may never set eyes upon him again. Have pity upon his father! Grant that he may come home safe, and live happily with her whom he loves so tenderly—so tenderly, O God." And then she would burst into tears, and drop asleep at last, sobbing.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

MR. KIRKPATRICK, Q.C.

CYNTHIA was always the same with Molly: kind, sweet-tempered, ready to help, professing a great deal of love for her, and probably feeling as much as she did for any one in the world. But Molly had reached to this superficial depth of affection and intimacy in the first few weeks of Cynthia's residence in her father's house; and if she had been of a nature prone to analyse the character of one whom she loved dearly, she might have perceived that, with all Cynthia's apparent frankness, there were certain limits beyond which her confidence did not go; where her reserve began, and her real self was shrouded in mystery. For instance, her relations with Mr. Preston were often very puzzling to Molly. She was sure that there had been a much greater intimacy between them formerly at Ashcombe, and that the remembrance of this was often very galling and irritating to Cynthia, who was as evidently desirous of forgetting it as he was anxious to make her remember it. But why this intimacy had ceased, why Cynthia disliked him so extremely now, and many other unexplained circumstances connected with these two facts, were Cynthia's secrets; and she effectually baffled all Molly's innocent attempts during the first glow of her friendship for Cynthia, to learn the girlish antecedents of her companion's life. Every now and then Molly came to a dead wall, beyond which she could not pass—at least with the delicate instruments which were all she chose to use. Perhaps Cynthia might have told all there was to tell to a more forcible curiosity, which knew how to improve every slip of the tongue and every fit of temper to its own gratification. But Molly's was the interest of affection, not the coarser desire of knowing everything for a little excitement; and as soon as she saw that Cynthia did not wish to tell her anything about that period of her life, Molly left off referring to it. But if Cynthia had preserved a sweet tranquillity of manner and an unvarying kindness for Molly during the winter of which

there is question, at present she was the only person to whom the beauty's ways were unchanged. Mr. Gibson's influence had been good for her as long as she saw that he liked her ; she had tried to keep as high a place in his good opinion as she could, and had curbed many a little sarcasm against her mother, and many a twisting of the absolute truth when he was by. Now there was a constant uneasiness about her which made her more cowardly than before ; and even her partisan, Molly, could not help being aware of the distinct equivocations she occasionally used when anything in Mr. Gibson's words or behaviour pressed her too hard. Her repartees to her mother were less frequent than they had been, but there was often the unusual phenomenon of pettishness in her behaviour to Mrs. Gibson. These changes in humour and disposition, here described all at once, were in themselves a series of delicate alterations of relative conduct spread over many months—many winter months of long evenings and bad weather, which bring out discords of character, as a dash of cold water brings out the fading colours of an old fresco.

During much of this time Mr. Preston had been at Ashcombe ; for Lord Cumnor had not been able to find an agent whom he liked to replace Mr. Preston ; and while the inferior situation remained vacant Mr. Preston had undertaken to do the duties of both. Mrs. Goodenough had had a serious illness ; and the little society at Hollingford did not care to meet while one of their habitual set was scarcely out of danger. So there had been very little visiting ; and though Miss Browning said that the absence of the temptations of society was very agreeable to cultivated minds, after the dissipations of the previous autumn, when there were parties every week to welcome Mr. Preston, yet Miss Phoebe let out in confidence that she and her sister had fallen into the habit of going to bed at nine o'clock, for they found cribbage night after night, from five o'clock till ten, rather too much of a good thing. To tell the truth, that winter, if peaceful, was monotonous in Hollingford ; and the whole circle of gentility there was delighted to be stirred up in March by the intelligence that Mr. Kirkpatrick, the newly-made Q.C., was coming on a visit of a couple of days to his sister-in-law Mrs. Gibson. Mrs. Goodenough's room was the very centre of gossip ; gossip had been her daily bread through her life, gossip was meat and wine to her now.

" Dear-ah-me ! " said the old lady, rousing herself so as to sit upright in her easy chair, and propping herself with her hands on the arms ; " who would ha' thought she'd such grand relations ! Why, Mr. Ashton told me once that a Queen's counsel was as like to be a judge as a kitten is like to be a cat. And to think of her being as good as a sister to a judge ! I saw one honest ; and I know I thought as I should not wish for a better winter-cloak than his old robes would make me, if I could only find out where I could get them second-hand. And I know she'd her silk gowns turned and dyed and cleaned, and, for aught I know, turned again, while she lived at Ashcombe. Keeping a school, too, and so near akin to this Queen's counsel all the time ! Well, to be sure, it was not much of a

school—only ten young ladies at the best o' times ; so perhaps he never heard of it."

"I've been wondering what they'll give him to dinner," said Miss Browning. "It is an unlucky time for visitors; no game to be had, and lamb so late this year, and chicken hardly to be had for love or money."

"He'll have to put up with calves' head, that he will," said Mrs. Goodenough, solemnly. "If I'd ha' got my usual health I'd copy out a receipt of my grandmother's for a rolled calves' head, and send it to Mrs. Gibson,—the doctor has been very kind to me all through this illness,—I wish my daughter in Combermere would send me some autumn chickens—I'd pass 'em on to the doctor, that I would ; but she's been a-killing of 'em all, and a-sending of them to me, and the last she sent she wrote me word was the last."

"I wonder if they'll give a party for him !" suggested Miss Phœbe. "I should like to see a Queen's counsel for once in my life. I have seen javelin-men, but that's the greatest thing in the legal line I ever came across."

"They'll ask Mr. Ashton, of course," said Miss Browning. "The three black graces, Law, Physic, and Divinity, as the song calls them. Whenever there's a second course, there's always the clergyman of the parish invited in any family of gentility.

"I wonder if he's married !" said Mrs. Goodenough. Miss Phœbe had been feeling the same wonder, but had not thought it maidenly to express it, even to her sister, who was the source of knowledge, having met Mrs. Gibson in the street on her way to Mrs. Goodenough's.

"Yes, he's married, and must have several children, for Mrs. Gibson said that Cynthia Kirkpatrick had paid them a visit in London, to have lessons with her cousins. And she said that his wife was a most accomplished woman, and of good family, though she brought him no fortune."

"It's a very creditable connection, I'm sure ; it's only a wonder to me as how we've heard so little talk of it before," said Mrs. Goodenough. "At the first look of the thing, I should not ha' thought Mrs. Gibson was one to hide away her fine relations under a bushel; indeed for that matter we're all of us fond o' turning the best breadth o' the gown to the front. I remember, speaking o' breadths, how I've undone my skirts many a time and oft to put a stain or a grease-spot next to poor Mr. Goodenough. He'd a soft kind of heart when first we was married, and he said, says he, 'Patty, link thy right arm into my left one, then thou'll be nearer to my heart ;' and so we kept up the habit, when, poor man, he'd a deal more to think on than romancing on which side his heart lay ; so as I said I always put my damaged breadths on the right hand, and when we walked arm in arm, as we always did, no one was never the wiser."

"I should not be surprised if he invited Cynthia to pay him another

visit in London," said Miss Browning. "If he did it when he was poor, he's twenty times more likely to do it now he's a Queen's counsel."

"Ay, work it by the rule o' three, and she stands a good chance. I only hope it won't turn her head; going up visiting in London at her age. Why, I was fifty before ever I went!"

"But she has been in France, she's quite a travelled young lady," said Miss Phoebe.

Mrs. Goodenough shook her head, for a whole minute before she gave vent to her opinion.

"It's a risk," said she, "a great risk. I don't like saying so to the doctor, but I should not like having my daughter, if I was him, so cheek-by-jowl with a girl as was brought up in the country where Robespierre and Bonaparte was born."

"But Buonaparte was a Corsican," said Miss Browning, who was much farther advanced both in knowledge and in liberality of opinions than Mrs. Goodenough. "And there's a great opportunity for cultivation of the mind afforded by intercourse with foreign countries. I always admire Cynthia's grace of manner, never too shy to speak, yet never putting herself forwards; she's quite a help to a party; and if she has a few airs and graces, why they're natural at her age! Now as for dear Molly, there's a kind of awkwardness about her—she broke one of our best china cups last time she was at a party at our house, and spilt the coffee on the new carpet; and then she got so confused that she hardly did anything but sit in a corner and hold her tongue all the rest of the evening."

"She was so sorry for what she'd done, sister," said Miss Phoebe, in a gentle tone of reproach; she was always faithful to Molly.

"Well, and did I say she wasn't? but was there any need for her to be stupid all the evening after?"

"But you were rather sharp,—rather displeased——"

"And I think it my duty to be sharp, ay, and cross too, when I see young folks careless. And when I see my duty clear I do it; I'm not one to shrink from it, and they ought to be grateful to me. It's not every one that will take the trouble of reproofing them, as Mrs. Goodenough knows. I'm very fond of Molly Gibson, very, for her own sake and for her mother's too; I'm not sure if I don't think she's worth half-a-dozen Cynthias, but for all that she should not break my best china tea-cup, and then sit doing nothing for her livelihood all the rest of the evening."

By this time Mrs. Goodenough gave evident signs of being tired; Molly's misdemeanors and Miss Browning's broken tea-cup were not as exciting subjects of conversation as Mrs. Gibson's newly-discovered good luck in having a successful London lawyer for a relation.

Mr. Kirkpatrick had been, like many other men, struggling on in his profession, and encumbered with a large family of his own; he was ready to do a good turn for his connections, if it occasioned him no loss of time, and if (which was, perhaps, a primary condition) he remembered

their existence. Cynthia's visit to Doughty Street nine or ten years ago had not made much impression upon him after he had once suggested its feasibility to his good-natured wife. He was even rather startled every now and then by the appearance of a pretty little girl amongst his own children, as they trooped in to dessert, and had to remind himself who she was. But as it was his custom to leave the table almost immediately and to retreat into a small back-room called his study, to immerse himself in papers for the rest of the evening, the child had not made much impression upon him; and probably the next time he remembered her existence was when Mrs. Kirkpatrick wrote to him to beg him to receive Cynthia for a night on her way to school at Boulogne. The same request was repeated on her return; but it so happened that he had not seen her either time; and only dimly remembered some remarks which his wife had made on one of these occasions, that it seemed to her rather hazardous to send so young a girl so long a journey without making more provision for her safety than Mrs. Kirkpatrick had done. He knew that his wife would fill up all deficiencies in this respect as if Cynthia had been her own daughter; and thought no more about her until he received an invitation to attend Mrs. Kirkpatrick's wedding with Mr. Gibson, the highly-esteemed surgeon of Hollingford, &c. &c.—an attention which irritated instead of pleasing him. “Does the woman think I have nothing to do but run about the country in search of brides and bridegrooms, when this great case of Houghton *v.* Houghton is coming on, and I have not a moment to spare?” he asked of his wife.

“Perhaps she never heard of it,” suggested Mrs. Kirkpatrick.

“Nonsense! the case has been in the papers for days.”

“But she mayn't know you are engaged in it.”

“She mayn't,” said he, meditatively—such ignorance was possible.

But now the great case of Houghton *v.* Houghton was a thing of the past; the hard struggle was over, the comparative table-land of Q. C.-dom gained, and Mr. Kirkpatrick had leisure for family feeling and recollection. One day in the Easter vacation he found himself near Hollingford; he had a Sunday to spare, and he wrote to offer himself as a visitor to the Gibsons from Friday to Monday, expressing strongly (what he really felt, in a less degree,) his wish to make Mr. Gibson's acquaintance. Mr. Gibson, though often overwhelmed with professional business, was always hospitable; and moreover, it was always a pleasure to him to get out of the somewhat confined mental atmosphere which he had breathed over and over again, and have a whiff of fresh air: a glimpse of what was passing in the great world beyond his daily limits of thought and action. So he was ready to give a cordial welcome to his unknown relation. Mrs. Gibson was in a flutter of sentimental delight, which she fancied was family affection, but which might not have been quite so effervescent if Mr. Kirkpatrick had remained in his former position of struggling lawyer, with seven children, living in Doughty Street.

When the two gentlemen met they were attracted towards each other

by a similarity of character, with just enough difference in their opinions to make the experience of each, on which such opinions were based, valuable to the other. To Mrs. Gibson, although the bond between them counted for very little in their intercourse, Mr. Kirkpatrick paid very polite attention ; and was, in fact, very glad that she had done so well for herself as to marry a sensible and agreeable man, who was able to keep her in comfort, and to behave to her daughter in so liberal a manner. Molly struck him as a delicate-looking girl, who might be very pretty if she had had a greater look of health and animation : indeed, looking at her critically, there were beautiful points about her face—long soft grey eyes, black curling eyelashes, rarely showing dimples, perfect teeth ; but there was a languor over all, a slow depression of manner, which contrasted unfavourably with the brightly-coloured Cynthia, sparkling, quick, graceful, and witty. As Mr. Kirkpatrick expressed it afterwards to his wife, he was quite in love with that girl ; and Cynthia, as ready to captivate strangers as any little girl of three or four, rose to the occasion, forgot all her cares and despondencies, remembered no longer her regret at having lost something of Mr. Gibson's good opinion, and listened eagerly and made soft replies, intermixed with naïve sallies of droll humour, till Mr. Kirkpatrick was quite captivated. He left Hollingford, almost surprised to have performed a duty, and found it a pleasure. For Mrs. Gibson and Molly he had a general friendly feeling ; but he did not care if he never saw them again. But for Mr. Gibson he had a warm respect, a strong personal liking, which he should be glad to have ripen into a friendship, if there was time for it in this bustling world. And he fully resolved to see more of Cynthia ; his wife must know her ; they must have her up to stay with them in London, and show her something of the world. But, on returning home, Mr. Kirkpatrick found so much work awaiting him that he had to lock up embryo friendships and kindly plans in some safe closet of his mind, and give himself up, body and soul, to the immediate work of his profession. But, in May, he found time to take his wife to the Academy Exhibition, and some portrait there, striking him as being like Cynthia, he told his wife more about her and his visit to Hollingford than he had ever had leisure to do before ; and the result was that on the next day a letter was sent off to Mrs. Gibson, inviting Cynthia to pay a visit to her cousins in London, and reminding her of many little circumstances that had occurred when she was with them as a child, so as to carry on the clue of friendship from that time to the present.

On its receipt this letter was greeted in various ways by the four people who sate round the breakfast-table. Mrs. Gibson read it to herself first. Then, without telling what its contents were, so that her auditors were quite in the dark as to what her remarks applied, she said,—

“ I think they might have remembered that I am a generation nearer to them than she is, but nobody thinks of family affection now-a-days ; and I liked him so much, and bought a new cookery-book, all to make it

pleasant and agreeable and what he was used to." She said all this in a plaintive, aggrieved tone of voice ; but as no one knew to what she was referring, it was difficult to offer her consolation. Her husband was the first to speak.

" If you want us to sympathize with you, tell us what is the nature of your woe."

" Why, I daresay it's what he means as a very kind attention, only I think I ought to have been asked before Cynthia," said she, reading the letter over again.

" Who's *he* ? and what's meant for a 'kind attention' ? "

" Mr. Kirkpatrick, to be sure. This letter is from him ; and he wants Cynthia to go and pay them a visit, and never says anything about you or me, my dear. And I'm sure we did our best to make it pleasant ; and he should have asked us first, I think."

" As I could not possibly have gone, it makes very little difference to me."

" But I could have gone ; and, at any rate, he should have paid us the compliment : it's only a proper mark of respect, you know. So ungrateful, too, when I gave up my dressing-room on purpose for him ! "

" And I dressed for dinner every day he was here, if we are each to recapitulate all our sacrifices on his behalf. But for all that I did not expect to be invited to his house. I shall be only too glad if he will come again to mine."

" I've a great mind not to let Cynthia go," said Mrs. Gibson, reflectively.

" I can't go, mamma," said Cynthia, colouring. " My gowns are all so shabby, and my old bonnet must do for the summer."

" Well, but you can buy a new one ; and I'm sure it is high time you should get yourself another silk-gown. You must have been saving up a great deal, for I don't know when you've had any new clothes."

Cynthia began to say something, but stopped short. She went on buttering her toast, but she held it in her hand without eating it ; without looking up either, as, after a minute or two of silence, she spoke again :—

" I cannot go. I should like it very much ; but I really cannot go. Please, mamma, write at once, and refuse it."

" Nonsense, child ! When a man in Mr. Kirkpatrick's position comes forward to offer a favour, it does not do to decline it without giving a sufficient reason. So kind of him as it is, too ! "

" Suppose you offer to go instead of me ? " proposed Cynthia.

" No, no ! that won't do," said Mr. Gibson, decidedly. " You can't transfer invitations in that way. But really this excuse about your clothes does appear to be very trivial, Cynthia, if you have no other reason to give."

" It is a real, true reason to me," said Cynthia, looking up at him as she spoke. " You must let me judge for myself. It would not do to go there in a state of shabbiness, for even in Doughty Street, I remember, my aunt was very particular about dress ; and now that Margaret and

Helen are grown up, and they visit so much,—pray don't say anything more about it, for I know it would not do."

"What have you done with all your money, I wonder?" said Mrs. Gibson. "You've twenty pounds a year, thanks to Mr. Gibson and me; and I'm sure you haven't spent more than ten."

"I had not many things when I came back from France," said Cynthia, in a low voice, and evidently troubled by all this questioning. "Pray let it be decided at once; I can't go, and there's an end of it." She got up, and left the room rather suddenly.

"I don't understand it at all," said Mrs. Gibson. "Do you, Molly?"

"No. I know she does not like spending money on her dress, and is very careful." Molly said this much, and then was afraid she had made mischief.

"But then she must have got the money somewhere. It always has struck me that if you have not extravagant habits, and do not live up to your income, you must have a certain sum to lay by at the end of the year. Have I not often said so, Mr. Gibson?"

"Probably."

"Well, then, apply the same reasoning to Cynthia's case; and then, I ask, what has become of the money?"

"I cannot tell," said Molly, seeing that she was appealed to. "She may have given it away to some one who wants it."

Mr. Gibson put down his newspaper.

"It is very clear that she has neither got the dress nor the money necessary for this London visit, and that she does not want any more inquiries to be made on the subject. She likes mysteries, in fact, and I detest them. Still, I think it is a desirable thing for her to keep up the acquaintance, or friendship, or whatever it is to be called, with her father's family; and I shall gladly give her ten pounds; and if that's not enough, why, either you must help her out, or she must do without some superfluous article of dress or another."

"I'm sure there never was such a kind, dear, generous man as you are, Mr. Gibson," said his wife. "To think of your being a stepfather! and so good to my poor fatherless girl! But, Molly my dear, I think you'll acknowledge that you too are very fortunate in your stepmother. Are not you, love? And what happy tête-à-têtes we shall have together when Cynthia goes to London. I'm not sure if I don't get on better with you even than with her, though she is my own child; for, as dear papa says so truly, there is a love of mystery about her; and if I hate anything, it is the slightest concealment or reserve. Ten pounds! Why, it will quite set her up, buy her a couple of gowns and a new bonnet, and I don't know what all! Dear Mr. Gibson, how generous you are!"

Something very like "Pshaw!" was growled out from behind the newspaper.

"May I go and tell her?" said Molly, rising up.

"Yes, do, love. Tell her it would be so ungrateful to refuse ; and tell her that your father wishes her to go ; and tell her, too, that it would be quite wrong not to avail herself of an opening which may by-and-by be extended to the rest of the family. I am sure if they ask me—which certainly they ought to do—I won't say before they asked Cynthia, because I never think of myself, and am really the most forgiving person in the world, in forgiving slights ;—but when they do ask me, which they are sure to do, I shall never be content till, by putting in a little hint here and a little hint there, I've induced them to send you an invitation. A month or two in London would do you so much good, Molly."

Molly had left the room before this speech was ended, and Mr. Gibson was occupied with his newspaper ; but Mrs. Gibson finished it to herself very much to her own satisfaction : for, after all, it was better to have some one of the family going on the visit, though she might not be the right person, than to refuse it altogether, and never to have the opportunity of saying anything about it. As Mr. Gibson was so kind to Cynthia, she too would be kind to Molly, and dress her becomingly, and invite young men to the house ; do all the things, in fact, which Molly and her father did not want to have done, and throw the old stumbling-blocks in the way of their unrestrained intercourse, which was the one thing they desired to have, free and open, and without the constant dread of her jealousy.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

SECRET THOUGHTS OOZE OUT.

MOLLY found Cynthia in the drawing-room, standing in the bow-window, looking out on the garden. She started as Molly came up to her.

"Oh, Molly," said she, putting her arms out towards her, "I am always so glad to have you with me !"

It was outbursts of affection such as these that always called Molly back, if she had been ever so unconsciously wavering in her allegiance to Cynthia. She had been wishing downstairs that Cynthia would be less reserved, and not have so many secrets ; but now it seemed almost like treason to have wanted her to be anything but what she was. Never had any one more than Cynthia the power spoken of by Goldsmith when he wrote—

He threw off his friends like a huntsman his pack,
For he knew when he liked he could whistle them back.

"Do you know, I think you'll be glad to hear what I've got to tell you ?" said Molly. "I think you would really like to go to London ; should not you ?"

"Yes, but it is of no use liking," said Cynthia. "Don't you begin about it, Molly, for the thing is settled ; and I can't tell you why, but I can't go."

"It is only the money, dear. And papa has been so kind about it.

He wants you to go ; he thinks you ought to keep up relationships ; and he is going to give you ten pounds."

" How kind he is !" said Cynthia. " But I ought not to take it. I wish I had known you years ago ; I should have been different to what I am."

" Never mind that ! We like you as you are ; we don't want you different. You'll really hurt papa if you don't take it. Why do you hesitate ? Do you think Roger won't like it ? "

" Roger ! no, I was not thinking about him ! Why should he care ? I shall be there and back again before he even hears about it."

" Then you will go ? " said Molly.

Cynthia thought for a minute or two. " Yes, I will," said she, at length. " I daresay it's not wise, but it will be pleasant, and I'll go. Where is Mr. Gibson ? I want to thank him. Oh, how kind he is ! Molly, you're a lucky girl ! "

" I ? " said Molly, quite startled at being told this ; for she had been feeling as if so many things were going wrong, almost as if they would never go right again.

" There he is ! " said Cynthia. " I hear him in the hall ! " And down she flew, and laying her hands on Mr. Gibson's arm, she thanked him with such warm impulsiveness, and in so pretty and caressing a manner, that something of his old feeling of personal liking for her returned, and he forgot for a time the causes of disapproval he had against her.

" There, there ! " said he, " that's enough, my dear ! It is quite right you should keep up with your relations ; there's nothing more to be said about it."

" I do think your father is the most charming man I know," said Cynthia, on her return to Molly ; " and it's that which always makes me so afraid of losing his good opinion, and fret so when I think he is displeased with me. And now let us think all about this London visit. It will be delightful, won't it ? I can make ten pounds go ever so far ; and in some ways it will be such a comfort to get out of Hollingford."

" Will it ? " said Molly, rather wistfully.

" Oh, yes ! You know I don't mean that it will be a comfort to leave you ; that will be anything but a comfort. But, after all, a country town is a country town, and London is London. You need not smile at my truisms ; I've always had a sympathy with M. de la Palisse,—

M. de la Palisse est mort
En perdant sa vie ;
Un quart d'heure avant sa mort
Il était en vie,"

sang she, in so gay a manner that she puzzled Molly, as she often did, by her change of mood from the gloomy decision with which she had refused to accept the invitation only half an hour ago. She suddenly took Molly round the waist, and began waltzing round the room with her, to the

imminent danger of the various little tables, loaded with "objets d'art" (as Mrs. Gibson delighted to call them) with which the drawing-room was crowded. She avoided them, however, with her usual skill; but they both stood still at last, surprised at Mrs. Gibson's surprise, as she stood at the door, looking at the whirl going on before her.

"Upon my word, I only hope you are not going crazy, both of you? What's all this about, pray?"

"Only because I'm so glad I'm going to London, mamma," said Cynthia, demurely.

"I'm not sure if it's quite the thing for an engaged young lady to be so much beside herself at the prospect of gaiety. In my time, our great pleasure in our lovers' absence was in thinking about them."

"I should have thought that would have given you pain, because you would have had to remember that they were away, which ought to have made you unhappy. Now, to tell you the truth, just at the moment I had forgotten all about Roger. I hope it was not very wrong. Osborne looks as if he did all my share as well as his own of the fretting after Roger. How ill he looked yesterday!"

"Yes," said Molly; "I did not know if any one besides me had noticed it. I was quite shocked."

"Ah," said Mrs. Gibson, "I'm afraid that young man won't live long—very much afraid," and she shook her head ominously.

"Oh, what will happen if he dies!" exclaimed Molly, suddenly sitting down, and thinking of that strange, mysterious wife who never made her appearance, whose very existence was never spoken about—and Roger away too!

"Well, it would be very sad, of course, and we should all feel it very much, I've no doubt; for I've always been very fond of Osborne; in fact, before Roger became, as it were, my own flesh and blood, I liked Osborne better: but we must not forget the living, dear Molly" (for Molly's eyes were filling with tears at the dismal thoughts presented to her). "Our dear good Roger would, I am sure, do all in his power to fill Osborne's place in any way; and his marriage need not be so long delayed."

"Don't speak of that in the same breath as Osborne's life, mamma," said Cynthia, hastily.

"Why, my dear, it is a very natural thought. For poor Roger's sake, you know, one wishes it not to be so very very long an engagement; and I was only answering Molly's question, after all. One can't help following out one's thoughts. People must die, you know—young, as well as old."

"If I ever suspected Roger of following out his thoughts in a similar way," said Cynthia, "I'd never speak to him again."

"As if he would!" said Molly, warm in her turn. "You know he never would; and you should not suppose it of him, Cynthia—no, not even for a moment!"

"I can't see the great harm of it all, for my part," said Mrs. Gibson, plaintively. "A young man strikes us all as looking very ill—and I'm sure I'm sorry for it; but illness very often leads to death. Surely you agree with me there, and what's the harm of saying so? Then Molly asks what will happen if he dies; and I try to answer her question. I don't like talking or thinking of death any more than any one else; but I should think myself wanting in strength of mind if I could not look forward to the consequences of death. I really think we're commanded to do so, somewhere in the Bible or the Prayer-book."

"Do you look forward to the consequences of my death, mamma?" asked Cynthia.

"You really are the most unfeeling girl I ever met with," said Mrs. Gibson, really hurt. "I wish I could give you a little of my own sensitiveness, for I have too much for my happiness. Don't let us speak of Osborne's looks again; ten to one it was only some temporary over-fatigue, or some anxiety about Roger, or perhaps a little fit of indigestion. I was very foolish to attribute it to anything more serious, and dear papa might be displeased if he knew I had done so. Medical men don't like other people to be making conjectures about health; they consider it as trenching on their own particular province, and very proper I'm sure. Now let us consider about your dress, Cynthia; I could not understand how you had spent your money, and made so little show with it."

"Mamma! it may sound very cross, but I must tell Molly and you, and everybody, once for all, that as I don't want and did not ask for more than my allowance, I'm not going to answer any questions about what I do with it." She did not say this with any want of respect; but she said it with quiet determination, which subdued her mother for the time, though often afterwards when Mrs. Gibson and Molly were alone, the former would start the wonder as to what Cynthia could possibly have done with her money, and hint each poor conjecture through words and volleys of doubt, till she was wearied out; and the exciting sport was given up for the day. At present, however, she confined herself to the practical matter in hand; and the genius for millinery and dress, inherent in both mother and daughter, soon settled a great many knotty points of contrivance and taste, and then they all three set to work to "gar auld claes look amraig as weel's the new."

Cynthia's relations with the squire had been very stationary ever since the visit she had paid to the Hall the previous autumn. He had received them all at that time with hospitable politeness, and he had also been more charmed with Cynthia than he liked to acknowledge to himself when he thought the visit all over afterwards.

"She's a pretty lass sure enough," thought he, "and has pretty ways about her too, and likes to learn from older people, which is a good sign; but somehow I don't like madam her mother, but still she is her mother, and the girl is her daughter; yet she spoke to her once or twice as I should not ha' liked our little Fanny to have spoken, if it had pleased God

for her to ha' lived. No, it's not the right way, and it may be a bit old-fashioned, but I like the right way. And then again she took possession o' me as I may say, and little Molly had to run after us in the garden walks that are too narrow for three, just like a little four-legged doggie ; and the other was so full of listening to me, she never turned round for to speak a word to Molly. I don't mean to say they're not fond of each other, and that's in Roger's sweetheart's favour, and it's very ungrateful in me to go and find fault with a lass who was so civil to me, and had such a pretty way with her of hanging on every word that fell from my lips. Well ! a deal may come and go in two years ! and the lad says nothing to me about it. I'll be as deep as him, and take no more notice of the affair till he comes home and tells me himself."

So although the squire was always delighted to receive the little notes which Cynthia sent to him every time she heard from Roger, and although this attention on her part was melting the heart he tried to harden, he controlled himself into writing her the briefest acknowledgments. His words were strong in meaning, but formal in expression ; she herself did not think much about them, being satisfied to do the kind actions that called them forth. But her mother criticized them and pondered them. She thought she had hit on the truth when she had decided in her own mind that it was a very old-fashioned style, and that he and his house and his furniture all wanted some of the brightening up and polishing which they were sure to receive, when——she never quite liked to finish the sentence definitely, although she kept repeating to herself that " there was no harm in it."

To return to the squire. Occupied as he now was, he recovered his former health, and something of his former cheerfulness. If Osborne had met him half-way, it is probable that the old bond between father and son might have been renewed; but Osborne either was really an invalid, or had sunk into invalid habits, and made no effort to rally. If his father urged him to go out—nay, once or twice he gulped down his pride, and asked Osborne to accompany him—Osborne would go to the window and find out some flaw or speck in the wind or weather, and make that an excuse for stopping in the house over his books. He would saunter out on the sunny side of the house in a manner that the squire considered as both indolent and unmanly. Yet if there was a prospect of his leaving home, which he did pretty often about this time, he was seized with a hectic energy : the clouds in the sky, the easterly wind, the dampness of the air, were nothing to him then; and as the squire did not know the real secret cause of this anxiety to be gone, he took it into his head that it arose from Osborne's dislike to Hamley and to the monotony of his father's society.

" It was a mistake," thought the squire. " I see it now. I was never great at making friends myself : I always thought those Oxford and Cambridge men turned up their noses at me for a country booby, and I'd get the start and have none o' them. But when the boys went to Rugby and

Cambridge, I should ha' let them have had their own friends about 'em, even though they might ha' looked down on me; it was the worst they could ha' done to me, and now what few friends I had have fallen off from me, by death or somehow, and it is but dreary work for a young man, I grant it. But he might try not to show it so plain to me as he does. I'm getting case-hardened, but it does cut me to the quick sometimes—it does. And he so fond of his dad as he was once! If I can but get the land drained I'll make him an allowance, and let him go to London, or where he likes. Maybe he'll do better this time, or maybe he'll go to the dogs altogether; but perhaps it will make him think a bit kindly of the old father at home—I should like him to do that, I should!"

It is possible that Osborne might have been induced to tell his father of his marriage during their long tête-à-tête intercourse, if the squire, in an unlucky moment, had not given him his confidence about Roger's engagement with Cynthia. It was on one wet Sunday afternoon, when the father and son were sitting together in the large empty drawing-room. Osborne had not been to church in the morning; the squire had, and he was now trying hard to read one of Blair's sermons. They had dined early; they always did on Sundays; and either that, or the sermon, or the hopeless wetness of the day, made the afternoon seem interminably long to the squire. He had certain unwritten rules for the regulation of his conduct on Sundays. Cold meat, sermon-reading, no smoking till after evening prayers, as little thought as possible as to the state of the land and the condition of the crops, and as much respectable sitting indoors in his best clothes as was consistent with going to church twice a day, and saying the responses louder than the clerk. To-day it had rained so unceasingly that he had remitted the afternoon church; but oh, even with the luxury of a nap, how long it seemed before he saw the Hall servants trudging homewards, along the field-path, a covey of umbrellas! He had been standing at the window for the last half-hour, his hands in his pockets, and his mouth often contracting itself into the traditional sin of a whistle, but as often checked into sudden gravity—ending, nine times out of ten, in a yawn. He looked askance at Osborne, who was sitting near the fire absorbed in a book. The poor squire was something like the little boy in the child's story, who asks all sorts of birds and beasts to come and play with him; and, in every case, receives the sober answer, that they are too busy to have leisure for trivial amusements. The father wanted the son to put down his book, and talk to him: it was so wet, so dull, and a little conversation would so wile away the time! But Osborne, with his back to the window where his father was standing, saw nothing of all this, and went on reading. He had assented to his father's remark that it was a very wet afternoon, but had not carried on the subject into all the varieties of truisms of which it was susceptible. Something more rousing must be started, and this the squire felt. The recollection of the affair between Roger and Cynthia came into his head, and, without giving it a moment's consideration, he began,—

"Osborne! Do you know anything about this—this attachment of Roger's?"

Quite successful. Osborne laid down his book in a moment, and turned round to his father.

"Roger! an attachment! No! I never heard of it—I can hardly believe it—that is to say, I suppose it is to—"'

And then he stopped; for he thought he had no right to betray his own conjecture that the object was Cynthia Kirkpatrick.

"Yes. He is though. Can you guess who to? Nobody that I particularly like—not a connection to my mind—yet she's a very pretty girl; and I suppose I was to blame in the first instance."

"Is it —?"

"It's no use beating about the bush. I've gone so far, I may as well tell you all. It's Miss Kirkpatrick, Gibson's stepdaughter. But it's not an engagement, mind you——"

"I'm very glad—I hope she likes Roger back again——"

"Like—it's only too good a connection for her not to like it: if Roger is of the same mind when he comes home, I'll be bound she'll be only too happy!"

"I wonder Roger never told me," said Osborne, a little hurt, now he began to consider himself.

"He never told me either," said the squire. "It was Gibson, who came here, and made a clean breast of it like a man of honour. I'd been saying to him, I could not have either of you two lads taking up with his lasses. I'll own it was you I was afraid of—it's bad enough with Roger, and maybe will come to nothing after all; but if it had been you, I'd ha' broken with Gibson and every mother's son of 'em, sooner than have let it go on; and so I told Gibson."

"I beg your pardon for interrupting you, but, once for all, I claim the right of choosing my wife for myself, subject to no man's interference," said Osborne, hotly.

"Then you'll keep your wife with no man's interference, that's all; for ne'er a penny will you get from me, my lad, unless you marry to please me a little, as well as yourself a great deal. That's all I ask of you. I'm not particular as to beauty, or as to cleverness, and piano-playing, and that sort of thing; if Roger marries this girl, we shall have enough of that in the family. I should not much mind her being a bit older than you, but she must be well-born, and the more money she brings the better for the old place."

"I say again, father, I choose my wife for myself, and I don't admit any man's right of dictation."

"Well, well!" said the squire, getting a little angry in his turn. "If I'm not to be father in this matter, thou shan't be son. Go against me in what I've set my heart on, and you'll find there's the devil to pay, that's all. But don't let us get angry, it's Sunday afternoon for one thing, and it's a sin; and besides that, I've not finished my story."

For Osborne had taken up his book again, and under pretence of reading, was fuming to himself. He hardly put it away even at his father's request.

"As I was saying, Gibson said, when first we spoke about it, that there was nothing on foot between any of you four, and that if there was, he would let me know; so by-and-by he comes and tells me of this."

"Of what—I don't understand how far it has gone?"

There was a tone in Osborne's voice the squire did not quite like; and he began answering rather angrily.

"Of this to be sure—of what I'm telling you—of Roger going and making love to this girl, that day he left, after he had gone away from here, and was waiting for the 'Umpire' in Hollingsford. One would think you quite stupid at times, Osborne."

"I can only say that these details are quite new to me; you never mentioned them before, I assure you."

"Well; never mind whether I did or not. I'm sure I said Roger was attached to Miss Kirkpatrick, and be hanged to her; and you might have understood all the rest, as a matter of course."

"Possibly," said Osborne, politely. "May I ask if Miss Kirkpatrick, who appeared to me to be a very nice girl, responds to Roger's affection?"

"Fast enough, I'll be bound," said the squire, sulkily. "A Hamley of Hamley is not to be had every day. Now, I'll tell you what, Osborne, you're the only marriageable one left in the market, and I want to hoist the old family up again. Don't go against me in this; it really will break my heart if you do."

"Father, don't talk so," said Osborne. "I will do anything I can to oblige you, except——"

"Except the only thing I've set my heart on your doing."

"Well, well, let it alone for the present. There's no question of my marrying just at this moment. I'm out of health, and I'm not up to going into society, and meeting young ladies and all that sort of thing, even if I had an opening into fitting society."

"You should have an opening fast enough. There'll be more money coming in, in a year or two, please God. And as for your health, why, what's to make you well, if you cower over the fire all day, and shudder away from a good honest tankard as if it were poison?"

"So it is to me," said Osborne, languidly, playing with his book as if he wanted to end the conversation and take it up again. The squire saw the movements, and understood them.

"Well," said he, "I'll go and have a talk with Will about poor old Black Bess. It's Sunday work enough, asking after a dumb animal's aches and pains."

But after his father had left the room Osborne did not take up his book again. He laid it down on the table by him, leant back in his chair, and covered his eyes with his hand. He was in a state of health which

made him despondent about many things, though, least of all, about what was most in danger. The long concealment of his marriage from his father made the disclosure of it far far more difficult than it would have been at first. Unsupported by Roger, how could he explain it all to one so passionate as the squire? how tell of the temptation, the stolen marriage, the consequent happiness, and alas! the consequent suffering?—for Osborne had suffered, and did suffer, greatly in the untoward circumstances in which he had placed himself. He saw no way out of it all, excepting by the one strong stroke of which he felt himself incapable. So with a heavy heart he addressed himself to his book again. Everything seemed to come in his way, and he was not strong enough in character to overcome obstacles. The only overt step he took in consequence of what he had heard from his father, was to ride over to Hollingford the first fine day after he had received the news, and go to see Cynthia and the Gibsons. He had not been there for a long time; bad weather and languor combined had prevented him. He found them full of preparations and discussions about Cynthia's visit to London; and she herself not at all in the sentimental mood proper to respond to his delicate intimations of how glad he was in his brother's joy. Indeed, it was so long after the time, that Cynthia scarcely perceived that to him the intelligence was recent, and that the first bloom of his emotions had not yet passed away. With her head a little on one side, she was contemplating the effect of a knot of ribbons, when he began, in a low whisper, and leaning forward towards her as he spoke,—“Cynthia—I may call you Cynthia now, mayn't I?—I am so glad of this news; I've only just heard of it, but I'm so glad!”

“What news do you mean?” She had her suspicions; but she was annoyed to think that from one person her secret was passing to another, and another, till, in fact, it was becoming no secret at all. Still, Cynthia could always conceal her annoyance when she chose. “Why are you to begin calling me Cynthia now?” she went on, smiling. “The terrible word has slipped out from between your lips before, do you know?”

This light way of taking his tender congratulation did not quite please Osborne, who was in a sentimental mood, and for a minute or so he remained silent. Then, having finished making her bow of ribbon, she turned to him, and continued, in a quick low voice, anxious to take advantage of a tête-à-tête between her mother and Molly,

“I think I can guess why you made me that pretty little speech just now. But do you know you ought not to have been told? And, moreover, things are not quite arrived at the solemnity of—of—well—an engagement. He would not have it so. Now, I shan't say any more; and you must not. Pray remember you ought not to have known; it is my own secret, and I particularly wished it not to be spoken about; and I don't like it's being so talked about. Oh, the leaking of water through one small hole!”

And then she plunged into the tête-à-tête of the other two, making

the conversation general. Osborne was rather discomfited at the non-success of his congratulations ; he had pictured to himself the unbozoming of a love-sick girl, full of rapture, and glad of a sympathizing confidant. He little knew Cynthia's nature. The more she suspected that she was called upon for a display of emotion, the less would she show ; and her emotions were generally under the control of her will. He had made an effort to come and see her ; and now he leant back in his chair, weary and a little dispirited.

" You poor dear young man," said Mrs. Gibson, coming up to him with her soft, soothing manner ; " how tired you look ! Do take some of that eau-de-Cologne and bathe your forehead. This spring weather overcomes me too. ' Primavera ' I think the Italians call it. But it is very trying for delicate constitutions, as much from its associations as from its variableness of temperature. It makes me sigh perpetually ; but then I am so sensitive. Dear Lady Cumnor always used to say I was like a thermometer. You've heard how ill she has been ? "

" No," said Osborne, not very much caring either.

" Oh, yes, she is better now ; but the anxiety about her has tried me so : detained here by what are, of course, my duties, but far away from all intelligence, and not knowing what the next post might bring."

" Where was she then ? " asked Osborne, becoming a little more sympathetic.

" At Spa. Such a distance off ! Three days' post ! Can't you conceive the trial ? Living with her as I did for years ; bound up in the family as I was."

" But Lady Harriet said, in her last letter, that they hoped that she would be stronger than she had been for years," said Molly, innocently.

" Yes—Lady Harriet—of course—every one who knows Lady Harriet knows that she is of too sanguine a temperament for her statements to be perfectly relied on. Altogether—strangers are often deluded by Lady Harriet—she has an off-hand manner which takes them in ; but she does not mean half she says."

" We will hope she does in this instance," said Cynthia, shortly. " They are in London now, and Lady Cumnor has not suffered from the journey."

" They say so," said Mrs. Gibson, shaking her head, and laying an emphasis on the word 'say.' " I am perhaps over-anxious, but I wish—I wish I could see and judge for myself. It would be the only way of calming my anxiety. I almost think I shall go up with you, Cynthia, for a day or two, just to see her with my own eyes. I don't quite like your travelling alone either. We will think about it, and you shall write to Mr. Kirkpatrick, and propose it, if we determine upon it. You can tell him of my anxiety ; and it will be only sharing your bed for a couple of nights."

CHAPTER XL.

MOLLY GIBSON BREATHES FREELY.

THAT was the way in which Mrs. Gibson first broached her intention of accompanying Cynthia up to London for a few days' visit. She had a trick of producing the first sketch of any new plan before an outsider to the family circle ; so that the first emotions of others, if they disapproved of her projects, had to be repressed, until the idea had become familiar to them. To Molly it seemed too charming a proposal ever to come to pass. She had never allowed herself to recognize the restraint she was under in her stepmother's presence ; but all at once she found it out when her heart danced at the idea of three whole days—for that it would be at the least—of perfect freedom of intercourse with her father; of old times come back again ; of meals without perpetual fidgetiness after details of ceremony and correctness of attendance.

" We'll have bread and cheese for dinner, and eat it on our knees ; we'll make up for having had to eat sloppy puddings with a fork instead of a spoon all this time, by putting our knives in our mouths till we cut ourselves. Papa shall pour his tea into his saucer if he is in a hurry ; and if I'm thirsty, I'll take the slop-basin. And oh, if I could but get, buy, borrow, or steal any kind of an old horse ; my grey skirt is not new, but it will do ;—that would be too delightful. After all, I think I can be happy again ; for months and months it has seemed as if I had got too old even to feel pleasure, much less happiness again."

So thought Molly. Yet she blushed, as if with guilt, when Cynthia, reading her thought, said to her one day :—

" Molly, you are very glad to get rid of us, are not you ? "

" Not of you, Cynthia ; at least, I don't think I am. Only, if you only knew how I love papa, and how I used to see a great deal more of him than I ever do now——"

" Ah ! I often think what interlopers we must seem, and are in fact——"

" I don't feel you as such. You, at any rate, have been a new delight to me, a sister ; and I never knew how charming such a relationship could be."

" But mamma ? " said Cynthia, half-suspiciously, half-sorrowfully.

" She is papa's wife," said Molly, quietly. " I don't mean to say I am not often very sorry to feel I am no longer first with him ; but it was"—the violent colour flushed into her face till even her eyes burnt, and she suddenly found herself on the point of crying ; the weeping ash-tree, the misery, the slow dropping comfort, and the comforters came all so vividly before her—" it was Roger ! "—she went on looking up at Cynthia, as she overcame her slight hesitation at mentioning his name—" Roger, who told me how I ought to take papa's marriage, when I was

first startled and grieved at the news. Oh, Cynthia, what a great thing it is to be loved by him!"

Cynthia blushed, and looked fluttered and pleased.

"Yes, I suppose it is. At the same time, Molly, I'm afraid he'll expect me to be always as good as he fancies me now, and I shall have to walk on tip-toe all the rest of my life."

"But you are good, Cynthia," put in Molly.

"No, I'm not. You're just as much mistaken as he is; and some day I shall go down in your opinions with a run, just like the hall clock the other day when the spring broke."

"I think he'll love you just as much," said Molly.

"Could you? Would you be my friend if—if it turned out even that I had done very wrong things? Would you remember how very difficult it has sometimes been to me to act rightly" (she took hold of Molly's hand as she spoke). "We won't speak of mamma, for your sake as much as mine or hers; but you must see she is not one to help a girl with much good advice, or good—Oh, Molly, you don't know how I was neglected just at a time when I wanted friends most. Mamma does not know it; it is not in her to know what I might have been if I had only fallen into wise, good hands. But I know it; and what's more," continued she, suddenly ashamed of her unusual exhibition of feeling, "I try not to care, which I daresay is really the worst of all; but I could worry myself to death if I once took to serious thinking."

"I wish I could help you, or even understand you," said Molly, after a moment or two of sad perplexity.

"You can help me," said Cynthia, changing her manner abruptly. "I can trim bonnets, and make head-dresses; but somehow my hands can't fold up gowns and collars, like your deft little fingers. Please will you help me to pack? That's a real, tangible piece of kindness, and not sentimental consolation for sentimental distresses, which are, perhaps, imaginary after all."

In general, it is the people who are left behind stationary, who give way to low spirits at any parting; the travellers, however bitterly they may feel the separation, find something in the change of scene to soften regret in the very first hour of separation. But as Molly walked home with her father from seeing Mrs. Gibson and Cynthia off to London by the "Umpire" coach, she almost danced along the street.

"Now, papa!" said she, "I'm going to have you all to myself for a whole week. You must be very obedient."

"Don't be tyrannical, then. You are walking me out of breath, and we are cutting Mrs. Goodenough, in our hurry."

"So they crossed over the street to speak to Mrs. Goodenough.

"We've just been seeing my wife and her daughter off to London. Mrs. Gibson has gone up for a week!"

"Deary, deary, to London, and only for a week! Why, I can remember

its being a three days' journey ! It will be very lonesome for you, Miss Molly, without your young companion !"

"Yes !" said Molly, suddenly feeling as if she ought to have taken this view of the case. "I shall miss Cynthia very much."

"And you, Mr. Gibson ; why, it will be like being a widower once again ! You must come and drink tea with me some evening. We must try and cheer you up a bit amongst us. Shall it be Tuesday ?"

In spite of the sharp pinch which Molly gave to his arm, Mr. Gibson accepted the invitation, much to the gratification of the old lady.

"Papa, how could you go and waste one of our evenings. We have but six in all, and now but five ; and I had so reckoned on our doing all sorts of things together."

"What sort of things ?"

"Oh, I don't know : everything that is unrefined and ungenteel," added she, slyly looking up into her father's face.

His eyes twinkled, but the rest of his face was perfectly grave. "I'm not going to be corrupted. With toil and labour I have reached a very fair height of refinement. I won't be pulled down again."

"Yes, you will, papa. We'll have bread and cheese for lunch this very day. And you shall wear your slippers in the drawing-room every evening you'll stay quietly at home ; and oh, papa, don't you think I could ride Nora Creina. I've been looking out the old grey skirt, and I think I could make myself tidy."

"Where is the side-saddle to come from ?"

"To be sure the old one won't fit that great Irish mare. But I'm not particular, papa. I think I could manage somehow."

"Thank you. But I'm not quite going to return into barbarism. It may be a depraved taste, but I should like to see my daughter properly mounted."

"Think of riding together down the lanes—why, the dog-roses must be all out in flower, and the honeysuckles, and the hay—how I should like to see Merriman's farm again ! Papa, do let me have one ride with you ! Please do. I am sure we can manage it somehow."

And "somehow" it was managed. "Somehow" all Molly's wishes came to pass ; there was only one little drawback to this week of holiday and happy intercourse with her father. Everybody would ask them out to tea. They were quite like bride and bridegroom ; for the fact was, that the late dinners which Mrs. Gibson had introduced into her own house, were a great inconvenience in the calculations of the small tea-drinkings at Hollingford. How ask people to tea at six, who dined at that hour ? How, when they refused cake and sandwiches at half-past eight, how induce other people who were really hungry to commit a vulgarity before those calm and scornful eyes ? So there had been a great lull of invitations for the Gibsons to Hollingford tea-parties. Mrs. Gibson, whose object was to squeeze herself into "county society," had taken this being left out of the smaller festivities with great equanimity ; but Molly missed the kind

homeliness of the parties to which she had gone from time to time as long as she could remember; and though, as each three-cornered note was brought in, she grumbled a little over the loss of another charming tête-à-tête with her father, she really was glad to go again in the old way among old friends. Miss Browning and Miss Phœbe were especially compassionate towards her in her loneliness. If they had had their will she would have dined there every day; and she had to call upon them very frequently in order to prevent their being hurt at her declining the dinners. Mrs Gibson wrote twice during her week's absence to her husband. That piece of news was quite satisfactory to the Miss Brownings, who had of late months held themselves a great deal aloof from a house where they chose to suppose that their presence was not wanted. In their winter evenings they had often talked over Mr. Gibson's household, and having little besides conjectures to go upon, they found the subject interminable, as they could vary the possibilities every day. One of their wonders was how Mr. and Mrs. Gibson really got on together; another was whether Mrs. Gibson was extravagant or not. Now two letters during the week of her absence showed what was in those days considered a very proper amount of conjugal affection. Yet not too much—at elevenpence halfpenny postage. A third letter would have been extravagant. Sister looked to sister with an approving nod as Molly named the second letter, which arrived in Hollingford the very day before Mrs. Gibson was to return. They had settled between themselves that two letters would show the right amount of good feeling and proper understanding in the Gibson family: more would have been extravagant; only one would have been a mere matter of duty. There had been rather a question between Miss Browning and Miss Phœbe as to which person the second letter (supposing it came) was to be addressed. It would be very conjugal to write twice to Mr. Gibson; and yet it would be very pretty if Molly came in for her share.

"You've had another letter, you say, my dear," asked Miss Browning. "I daresay Mrs. Gibson has written to you this time?"

"It is a large sheet, and Cynthia has written on one half to me, and all the rest is to papa."

"A very nice arrangement, I'm sure. And what does Cynthia say? Is she enjoying herself?"

"Oh, yes, I think so. They have had a dinner-party, and one night when mamma was at Lady Cumnor's, Cynthia went to the play with her cousins."

"Upon my word! and all in one week? I do call that dissipation. Why, Thursday would be taken up with the journey, and Friday with resting, and Sunday is Sunday all the world over; and they must have written on Tuesday. Well! I hope Cynthia won't find Hollingford dull, that's all, when she comes back."

"I don't think it's likely," said Miss Phœbe, with a little simper and a knowing look, which sate oddly on her kindly innocent face. "You see a great deal of Mr. Preston, don't you, Molly!"

"Mr. Preston!" said Molly, flushing up with surprise. "No! not much. He's been at Ashcombe all winter, you know! He has but just come back to settle here. What should make you think so!"

"Oh! a little bird told us," said Miss Browning. Molly knew that little bird from her childhood, and had always hated it, and longed to wring its neck. Why could not people speak out and say that they did not mean to give up the name of their informant? But it was a very favourite form of fiction with the Miss Brownings, and to Miss Phœbe it was the very acme of wit.

"The little bird was flying about one day in Heath Lane, and it saw Mr. Preston and a young lady—we won't say who—walking together in a very friendly manner, that is to say, he was on horseback; but the path is raised above the road, just where there is the little wooden bridge over the brook——"

"Perhaps Molly is in the secret, and we ought not to ask her about it," said Miss Phœbe, seeing Molly's extreme discomfiture and annoyance.

"It can be no great secret," said Miss Browning, dropping the little-bird formula, and assuming an air of dignified reproof at Miss Phœbe's interruption, "for Miss Hornblower says Mr. Preston owns to being engaged——"

"At any rate it is not to Cynthia, that I know positively," said Molly with some vehemence. "And pray put a stop to any such reports; you don't know what mischief they may do. I do so hate that kind of chatter!" It was not very respectful of Molly to speak in this way to be sure, but she thought only of Roger; and the distress any such reports might cause, should he ever hear of them (in the centre of Africa!) made her colour up scarlet with vexation.

"Heighy-teighty! Miss Molly! don't you remember that I am old enough to be your mother, and that it is not pretty behaviour to speak so to us—to me! 'Chatter' to be sure. Really, Molly——"

"I beg your pardon," said Molly, only half-penitent.

"I daresay you did not mean to speak so to sister," said Miss Phœbe, trying to make peace.

Molly did not answer all at once. She counted to explain how much mischief might be done by such reports.

"But don't you see," she went on, still flushed by vexation, "how bad it is to talk of such things in such a way? Supposing one of them cared for some one else, and that might happen, you know; Mr. Preston, for instance, may be engaged to some one else?"

"Molly! I pity the woman! Indeed I do. I have a very poor opinion of Mr. Preston," said Miss Browning, in a warning tone of voice; for a new idea had come into her head.

"Well, but the woman, or young lady, would not like to hear such reports about Mr. Preston."

"Perhaps not. But for all that, take my word for it, he's a great flirt, and young ladies had better not have much to do with him."

"I daresay it was all accident their meeting in Heath Lane," said Miss Phœbe.

"I know nothing about it," said Molly, "and I daresay I have been impertinent, only please don't talk about it any more. I have my reasons for asking you." She got up, for by the striking of the church clock she had just found out that it was later than she had thought, and she knew that her father would be at home by this time. She bent down and kissed Miss Browning's grave and passive face.

"How you are growing, Molly!" said Miss Phœbe, anxious to cover over her sister's displeasure. "As tall and as straight as a poplar-tree!" as the old song says.

"Grow in grace, Molly, as well as in good looks!" said Miss Browning, watching her out of the room. As soon as she was fairly gone, Miss Browning got up and shut the door quite securely, and then sitting down near her sister, she said, in a low voice, "Phœbe, it was Molly herself that was with Mr. Preston in Heath Lane that day when Mrs. Goodenough saw them together!"

"Gracious goodness me!" exclaimed Miss Phœbe, receiving it at once as gospel. "How do you know?"

"By putting two and two together. Did not you notice how red Molly went, and then pale, and how she said she knew for a fact that Mr. Preston and Cynthia Kirkpatrick were not engaged?"

"Perhaps not engaged; but Mrs. Goodenough saw them loitering together, all by their own two selves——"

"Mrs. Goodenough only crossed Heath Lane at the Shire Oak, as she was riding in her phaeton," said Miss Browning, sententiously. "We all know what a coward she is in a carriage, so that most likely she had only half her wits about her, and her eyes are none of the best when she is standing steady on the ground. Molly and Cynthia have got their new plaid shawls just alike, and they trim their bonnets alike, and Molly is grown as tall as Cynthia since Christmas. I was always afraid she'd be short and stumpy, but she's now as tall and slender as any one need be. I'll answer for it, Mrs. Goodenough saw Molly, and took her for Cynthia."

When Miss Browning "answered for it" Miss Phœbe gave up doubting. She sate some time in silence revolving her thoughts. Then she said:

"It would not be such a very bad match after all, sister." She spoke very meekly, awaiting her sister's sanction to her opinion.

"Phœbe, it would be a bad match for Mary Preston's daughter. If I had known what I know now we'd never have had him to tea last September."

"Why, what do you know?" asked Miss Phœbe.

"Miss Hornblower told me many things; some that I don't think you ought to hear, Phœbe. He was engaged to a very pretty Miss Gregson,

at Henwick, where he comes from ; and her father made inquiries, and heard so much that was bad about him, that he made his daughter break off the match, and she's dead since !"

" How shocking !" said Miss Phœbe, duly impressed.

" Besides, he plays at billiards and he bets at races, and some people do say he keeps race-horses."

" But is not it strange that the earl keeps him on as his agent ?"

" No ! perhaps not. He's very clever about land, and very sharp in all law affairs ; and my lord is not bound to take notice — if indeed he knows—of the manner in which Mr. Preston talks when he has taken too much wine."

" Taken too much wine. Oh, sister, is he a drunkard ? and we have had him to tea ! "

" I did not say he was a drunkard, Phœbe," said Miss Browning, pettishly. " A man may take too much wine occasionally, without being a drunkard. Don't let me hear you using such coarse words, Phœbe ! "

Miss Phœbe was silent for a time after this rebuke.

Presently she said, " I do hope it was not Molly Gibson."

" You may hope as much as you like, but I'm pretty sure it was. However, we'd better say nothing about it to Mrs. Goodenough ; she has got Cynthia into her head, and there let her rest. Time enough to set reports afloat about Molly when we know there's some truth in them. Mr. Preston might do for Cynthia, who's been brought up in France, though she has such pretty manners ; but it may have made her not particular. He must not, and he shall not, have Molly, if I go into church and forbid the banns myself ; but I'm afraid—I'm afraid there's something between her and him. We must keep on the look-out, Phœbe. I'll be her guardian angel, in spite of herself."

Old Election Days in Ireland.

FOR a century and a half after Henry the Second accomplished the Anglo-Norman conquest of Ireland, one parliament, on this side of the Irish Sea, legislated for both kingdoms. An Irish difficulty effected a reform in this mode of government. The invasion of Ireland, by Bruce, at the close of the reign of Edward the Second, obtained for that country the right to legislate for its own affairs, but yet with a certain dependency on the parliament in England. That dependency was scarcely increased till the introduction of Poyning's law, in the reign of Henry the Seventh : a law which enacted that before an Irish parliament could assemble, it must first obtain the sanction of the King of England, and that previous to such sanction being asked, the applicants must state, in full detail, the measures they wished to propose, and the bills they desired to pass.

Till the thirty-third year of Henry the Eighth, no man could represent an Irish constituency, who was not English "by birth" or "by blood," the latter implying a person of English descent, but born in Ireland. The native maternal blood in these persons is said to have rendered them more Irish than the Irish themselves. From this period, the vote of a Roman Catholic could not be tendered ; but the complete subjection of the Irish to the English legislature was not established till the year 1719, when a law was passed which, allowing the Irish parliament to legislate independently, bound that body to recognize the legality of *all* acts passed by the English parliament. This, of course, destroyed the independence that was nominally allowed, for such a law authorized the English House to undo all that had been done by the Irish House, and compelled the latter to submit to the authority and its consequences.

In those old days, the duration of the Irish parliamentary existence depended on the good pleasure of the King, and the good behaviour of the representatives. It was not till 1768 that Dr. Lucas, a man of vast importance in his time, succeeded in carrying through a bill which enacted that the duration of an Irish parliament should not exceed eight years.

Fourteen years later came the greatest reform of all. England had made many concessions to Irish demands, but in 1782 there was a spirit abroad, and it was especially active in Ireland, which no concessions could altogether satisfy. The eager spirit of Irishmen led them to deny the supremacy of the English legislature over that of Ireland, and the right of the Irish Privy Council, under Poyning's Act, of the reign of Henry the Seventh, to originate laws for the Irish parliament to pass. The most formidable of those who made this denial were the hundred and forty-

three corps of armed Volunteers, who in convention, at Dungannon, had resolved upon redressing all "Irish grievances," and who registered a declaration to the effect that while they were "*disposed* to be loyal," they were "*determined* to be free." Grattan spoke to the same effect in the Irish House, whence an address was sent up to the throne, so very convincing in its phraseology, that the English parliament was led at once to repeal the obnoxious Act of George the First, which had made the Irish legislature subservient to that of Great Britain.

From that time till the year 1800, when the Act of Union was passed, Ireland possessed or enjoyed a parliament of its own. It is difficult to describe these dozen years of independence: according to some, they were years of purity and patriotism; if others be credited, they were years of nearly unmitigated baseness and corruption. To our thinking, there is some truth in both these reports.

It is a very singular fact that in the old election days in Ireland, a Protestant might lose his franchise by what the law called an ill-assorted marriage! A lover might ask and exclaim,—

From the heretic girl of my soul shall I fly,
To seek somewhere else a more orthodox kiss ?
No! perish the hearts and the laws that try
Truth, valour, or love, by a standard like this!

A Protestant elector, however, who married a Roman Catholic lady, was bound to convert her, within a year, if he wished to preserve his vote. For example, at the election for Clonmel, county Tipperary, in 1761, the agent for one of the candidates tendered his vote; whereupon the opposing agent started up, and exclaiming, "You know you married a Papist!" disfranchised him at once; for this was not only the fact, but the husband had failed to bring over his wife to his own church within the time appointed by law. And then, the usual little formula followed. The disfranchised agent challenged his disfranchiser, and as in those days Irish gentlemen always carried their "reporters" or pistols with them, the two adversaries walked on to Clonmel Green, on the banks of the Suir, to settle their tempers. They were followed by an excited mob, whose entire sympathy was with the liberal and disfranchised agent. Pistol duels were, at that time, commonly fought on horseback, and our brace of agents, with a brace of pistols to each, were in saddle, moving their horses in narrow circles round each other, till opportunity presented itself for firing with effect. In those days, aim was taken, murder was meant, and the boast of "killing one's man" was made without apologetic paraphrase or hypocritical euphemism. The objecting agent was the first, on this occasion, to recognize opportunity; delivering his fire, he shot his antagonist through the heart, and the poor fellow rolled dead from the saddle on to the green. A scream of execration and a cry for vengeance went up from the exasperated mob, and there would soon have been another mutilated wretch upon the turf, had he not had

presence of mind again to recognize opportunity. He plunged, horse and rider, into the Suir, and swimming to the opposite bank, escaped across the country. As for the poor fellow who had lost his vote and life because he had neglected to convert his wife, the killing him was doubtless illegal. Dead, the law would avenge him, but living, the law despised him. He was stigmatized as "a constructive Papist"—a more odious sort of "Papist" than one who was a Roman Catholic by birth, education, profession, and principle.

Twenty-two years later, that is, in 1783, General Walsh and Mr. Warburton were rival candidates for the representation of Queen's County. On this occasion the candidates did not come into deadly collision, but all Irish spirit was not so entirely dead as to allow the election to pass off without a *rencontre*. If the candidates could not quarrel or fight, there were not wanting electors ready and willing to do both. At an election drinking-bout in one of the taverns, a half-t tipsy exciseman, who was *ex officio* disfranchised, was lamenting the lack of belligerent spirit in the people, when his eye fell on the open mouth of Jemmy Skelton, an elector, who was asleep at the opposite side of the table. Delighted at the opportunity, and grateful to the gods who sent it, the exciseman thrust his riding-whip down Skelton's throat. The uproar that ensued was perfectly delicious; so genuine a row had not awakened the echoes of Maryborough for many a long year. Everybody was excited and at his ease, except Jemmy Skelton, who was indeed as excited as everybody, but who was not so much at his ease, while the whip was still sticking in his throat. When something like calmness or a more concentrated rage was established, the usual arrangements for the *duello* were gone into, not altogether to the satisfaction of Skelton, who thought that a riding-whip in the gullet might have exempted him from a bullet in the thorax.

"No fear of you," said one of his seconds, as he clapped a brace of pistols into Jemmy's not too willing hands. "All you'll have to do, Jemmy," said the other, "is to lose no time. Only look alive, and you'll keep so!"

The exciseman and the chivalrous elector fought on the green at Maryborough, where tents were pitched, and a crowd with divided sympathies was assembled, and whisky was circulated in tin cups, and everything looked as cheerful and comfortable as Irish electors of the year 1783 could reasonably desire. They certainly found more fun than they at least expected, for Skelton's promptitude took them by surprise. With both pistols held before him, he went up at the "double quick" to the exciseman, and before any word or sign was given, he "blazed away," according to the instructions of his seconds, and, bringing down the exciseman by a shot in the leg, fired the other pistol full at him as he lay on the ground.

"Oh, you sanguinary villain," exclaimed the exciseman, as he lay on the grass, unhurt, however, by the second shot. "Do you want to take my life?"

"I do," said the candid Jemmy. "I've come here on purpose." But seeing that the exciseman was about to fire in *his* turn, Skelton having done all that opportunity offered, and being extremely careful of his own person, dropped his pistols and bolted from the ground with the utmost precipitation. The assembled multitude laughed so loud that they could not hoot him, and Jemmy ran too fast to allow them a chance of bringing him back to place him under fire.

These encounters alternated from grave to gay. One of the saddest occurred in the year 1808, in connection with the polling at Wexford. It has not been noticed by Sheridan's biographers that he was a candidate for Wexford in that year. He was, however, only nominally so; his name was put up, but he did not attend, nor did his friends exert themselves. All the polling lay between Colclough and Alcock. At the hustings, many electors who had promised their votes to the latter, treacherously tendered them to the former. Alcock called on his friend, yet opponent, to reject these votes; but Colclough, anxious, of course, to be at the head of the poll, accepted them with alacrity, and thanked the rascals with much satirical gratitude. This so exasperated Alcock that he sent a challenge to his adversary, which was couched in such terms that Colclough, according to the ideas of those days, could not possibly decline it. The men were not only friends, but their families were united in bonds of friendship too. Two of the members of those families were, if we mistake not, united in more tender bonds than those of friendship, or this electioneering drama would not have terminated so fatally. The two friends, accompanied as was the custom by troops of those who called themselves their friends, met near the quaint and ancient-looking city. They were as courteous to each other as if offence had neither been given, taken, or understood. There was no malice between them; but what was then called "honour" had been wounded, and when such damage had been done it was always repaired by murder, or an attempt at it. The two friends fired, Colclough clapped his hand to his side, fell back dead, and "honour" was satisfied. The conclusion pronounced by some of the spectators, of "there's an end to that matter," was, however, not the true one. Alcock, unharmed in body, had received such a mental shock at seeing his friend lying stark dead on the turf, that he was more to be pitied than the poor fellow he had so swiftly and suddenly slain. Assuredly, his condition was worse than that of the dead man; for he speedily sank into an imbecility from which he never recovered. Nor did the consequences end there. Alcock's sister, after mourning the condition of such a brother, might have met the world and its sunlight again, when the shadow of her great sorrow had passed away; but the fact that such a dear brother had shot her dearest friend, eclipsed the world and sunlight altogether, and the lady's mind unhappily perished long before the natural death of her body.

Some one has said that a state of war is the natural state of man; and in Ireland, at least, even infants were brought up on such a principle, as

late as the beginning of the present century. When Sir John Bourke and Amby Bodkin had a fierce quarrel, arising partly out of an electioneering discussion, they met armed for the *duello* on the lawn in front of the baronet's house, near Glinsk. Neighbours were there, and tenants were there, and strangers who had heard of what was likely to be the fore, were there also. All the household work was suspended, for all the servants had gathered together at a corner of the house, to see the master blaze away, and blow out Amby Bodkin's brains. The very nursery yielded its representatives. The house-steward had hastened thither just before the duel commenced, and taking Bourke's delighted little son by the hand, ran with him down to the lawn, where the too zealous steward hoisted him on to his shoulder, that he might "see papa fight!" It was a rare sight, and the boy crowded and clapped his hands from his elevation above the heads of the people. Not only the principals, but the seconds took part in the bloody fray. Each principal and his two friends delivered their fire simultaneously. As the smoke blew away Amby Bodkin and a second on either side were seen stretched on the ground, with holes in their carcases, and some angry blood flowing therefrom. But Sir John was erect, unscathed, and hilarious. The wounded were attended to, the spectators dispersed, and the baronet and his more immediate friends went into the house for luncheon and claret; and the little boy who was with them, and had holiday for the remainder of the day, was enabled to gather from their discourse, what a merry and honourable thing it was to mutilate two or three gentlemen on a lawn, on a fine spring morning.

Probably, the most remarkable example of Irish electioneering peculiarities is to be found in the story of the contest for Castlebar, county Mayo,—a contest which excited much antagonistic feeling some half century ago, and which is well remembered and briskly talked of in the locality even now. It is as frequently referred to as the famous "Castlebar Races," a name given to the strategic movement of the French under General Humbert, when the Marquis of Ormonde appeared in sight of the town with the express purpose of accelerating their movements.

For this pleasant little town, a candidate offered himself in the person of a well-esteemed gentleman of the neighbourhood, named Brown. His success seemed certain, for there was no opposition; but Brown had a friend, and an Irish friend being always disposed to render things lively and pleasant, the one in question (his name was Bingham) offered himself to the electors, as the opponent of Brown. This was looked upon as an exceedingly lively move, all the more so as Bingham's prospects became at once brighter than Brown's, and mischief was likely to be one of the much-coveted consequences.

Brown, indeed, looked serious; but mutual and vivacious friends resolved that matters should be made agreeable to gentlemen and custom, and they accordingly intimated to Brown that, if he would succeed, he must do the proper thing, namely, call Bingham out, and shoot him dead upon the spot. Now Brown had some foolish little scruples, and if he had

listened to them, and weakly yielded to considerations of humanity, morality, and the sixth commandment, the whole fun of an election would have been damaged altogether. Brown and Bingham were intimate friends ; Bingham had a perfect right to contest Castlebar with Brown ; the two things considered, Brown saw that he would be perfectly justified in calling Bingham out and shooting him if he could.

Both were pleasant fellows, as well as hearty friends, and it was as difficult a matter for Brown to pick a quarrel and fasten it upon a man, as it was for Bingham to take offence, when none was intended. Yet the thing must be accomplished, or dull indeed would be the election time in the good town of Castlebar. Brown meditated and hesitated, but he was told that, like Macbeth's little affair, it not only must be done, but it could be done well only by being done quickly. Brown did not lack courage ; what he wanted was an excuse : but an Irishman's invention is a marvellous machine, and Brown's was in full and efficient play, as he sauntered into the Castlebar club-room and saw Bingham writing a letter, at a table adjacent to a window which looked into a field, or garden. Brown walked slowly up to the writer, who was quite unconscious of his adversary's approach, and leaning over him, said very distinctly and unpleasantly :—

“Bingham ; you lie !”

Bingham looked up with mingled astonishment and fierceness, and then, addressing the members of the club (who were scattered about the room), as if he could scarcely believe his own ears,—

“My G—d, gentlemen ! did you hear that ? And I that never spoke to him !”

“Never mind, Bingham,” said Brown. “If you didn't speak a lie, you were thinking one !”

Bingham was a sensible man, quite amenable to reason, and he recognized the propriety and tendency of things at once. A man could not fight unless offence was given, and another could not fight unless the offence was taken. Brown had been clever enough to give it ; Bingham was reasonable enough to take it. The logical sequence was that a duel was inevitable, and that all Castlebar would be delighted to witness it.

When pistols had been procured—and they, as a matter of course, at an election time, of all others, were “handy” or “convenient”—the rival candidates descended to the field or garden behind the house, where the delighted members and as many of the townsfolk as had heard of what was to take place, were assembled. All the usual formalities having been gone through with the usual ceremonious politeness, the two friends, each bent on shooting the other, were placed at a distance of twenty paces, with liberty to advance on each other, and to fire when either thought that time, opportunity, and the devil, who presides at this sort of murder, were likely to be in his favour.

The adversaries stood motionless for a moment at the extreme distance, after the word was given to close ; then they moved slowly, each keeping

his eyes fixed on those of his antagonist, but neither of them taking aim, for by this time to take aim in a duel was deliberately to commit or at least to intend murder. When half the intervening distance had been got over, Bingham, the more impatient combatant of the two, suddenly raised his arm, fired, and widely missed. He saw at once that he had lost the election. Brown, raising his pistol, exclaimed,—“Bingham, I'll shoot you !”

“Shoot and be d——d!” cried Bingham, in return, with all the expletive emphasis that was in fashion fifty years ago, from Carlton House to Connemara.

Brown was far from being such a fool as to follow the ill-meant counsel. With a sort of triumphant laugh, he raised his pistol in the air, and fired at what Mr. Carlyle calls “the Cathedral of Immensities.” He had won the election, and Mr. Bingham was highly disgusted.

He had won the election; for, had Brown shot Bingham, he would probably have been compelled to retire from the hot though temporary pursuit of the law, and if Bingham survived the wound inflicted, he would necessarily come in by force of the sympathies of all the electors. But here was his friend and adversary, Brown, who had given him his life, and the law of chivalry would not allow of his opposing a man to whom he was indebted for such a boon. Bingham accordingly retired, and Brown was elected without opposition. The successful candidate was thoroughly convinced that there was no such process for getting rid of an opponent as calling him out, and *not* shooting him. But this conviction overlooked the circumstance that Bingham might *not* have missed when he fired at Brown. To obviate all possibility of failure in future, the former took to the practice of pistol-shooting at a mark, as the most important preparation for successfully obtaining the votes of an enlightened constituency.

Indeed, a knowledge of pistol-practice and everything connected therewith was not only necessary in order to get a man into the old Irish parliament, but also to keep him there. A candidate was never sure of getting through a canvass without being challenged to the field. He was a lucky man if he lived through the polling days without being, at least, disabled. If he gained the election, the losing opponent was pretty sure to shape things so as to have a shot at and with him, and thereby have at least the chance of creating a vacancy. If he was the loser in the contest, he had the same end in view; and, in short, few men gained access to the Irish House, save by the ordeal of fire. The access being gained, it was sometimes difficult to keep a footing there without the exercise of the utmost discretion. No senators made such vociferous claim for freedom of debate as the Irish members; but they had the greatest disgust for freedom of comment. The simplest remark uttered while a member was speaking, was at the extreme peril of the commentator. There was not a parliamentary orator in the Irish House, who claimed so much liberty of assertion on his own part, and resented freedom of argument on the part

of those who replied to him, as Hely Hutchinson. On one occasion, he was making the house in College Green ring with the echoes of his voice, most of the members deaf with the thunder of his vociferation, and some few listeners aghast at the fierceness of his spirit, and the marvellous irrationality of his logic. Dr. Lucas availed himself of a moment when Hely paused to draw breath, and he then said quietly, and without any distinct intention of being heard by Hutchinson, or any other person :—“ Rest, rest, perturbed spirit ! ” Had he shrieked, “ Houl’ yer tongue, ye blaggard ! ” Hely could not have been more exasperated. Hely’s friends, of course, took his view of the offence—they would have taken any view that was to lead to a “ meeting ” in the Phoenix Park ;—and Dr. Lucas would have lost his social position if he had not accepted the challenge which ensued. The respectively foolish parties met, accordingly, but the affair was not very lively, inasmuch as it was not deadly and exciting, for the parties left the field as they entered it, and all parties, the spectators included, seemed to think they had had their morning’s trouble for nothing.

Hely Hutchinson, in or out of parliament, was one of the most provoking of human beings. At the hustings, or in the senate, he was equally a terror to peaceful people, and his sons so nearly resembled their sire that, at one Irish election time, he and these three sons were, on the same day, engaged in duels ! On another occasion, Hutchinson challenged the old Attorney-General Tisdale, but Tisdale declined :—“ If I should kill you,” said the aged lawyer, “ I should get nothing but the pleasure of killing you; whereas, if you kill me, you will get my place of Secretary of State, of which you have the reversion.” Hely’s rapacity was notorious ; and this provost of Dublin is said, in a political crisis, to have squeezed from Lord Townshend a majorship of dragoons, the duties of which were performed by a deputy ! Lord North took correct measure of this famous Irish M.P., and before introducing him to George the Third, told the King, in words that have never been forgotten :—“ Mr. Hutchinson is a man on whom if your Majesty was pleased to bestow the United Kingdom, he would ask the Isle of Man as a potato-garden.”

Nothing could well be more off-hand as well as more high-handed than the way in which some of the Irish elections were carried on in the last century. In 1790, there was an election at Ballymakill. The borough had been a corrupt and enslaved pocket-borough time out of mind. The candidates were Sir Jonah Barrington and the Marquis of Drogheda. The latter, disregarding the electors, made sure of the returning-officer. This worthy person’s name was French, and he was so well manipulated by his lordship, that he very speedily made things comfortable for his employer. He received six votes for his lordship, disallowed all those that were tendered for Barrington, and at the end of an hour or two, declared that the Marquis of Drogheda had been duly elected by a majority of the electors of the enlightened borough of Ballymakill.

The Earl of Aldborough acted even more imprudently than the

Marquis of Drogheda. Two brothers presented themselves for the honour of representing the constituents of Baltinglas. Before the election for a member, it was necessary that a returning-officer should be elected by the proper corporate authorities. Lord Aldborough put up his sister, Lady Harriet Stratford, for that office. Although the lady obtained only a minority of votes, that corporate minority pronounced her to have been legally chosen, and she was installed at the hustings. The flouted majority set up *their* officer and candidates in another part of the borough. Each officer made a return of the due election,—Lady Harriet, of Lord Aldborough's two friends, and the male returning-officer, of the two brothers. Baltinglas had never seen such a "row" as the one that ensued. There was not a head left whole in the borough that night, the heads of the whisky-barrels included. But might did not succeed in lording it over right. When the double return came before the House, that of the Aldborough White-Sergeant and her faction was declared to be illegal, and the two brothers took their seats, to the confusion of the Earl and Lady Harriet.

Previous to the time when the question of Catholic Emancipation was to be finally discussed and decided, the Irish landlords depended, without hesitation, on their forty-shilling freeholders. It did not enter into the imagination of the former that such freeholders would ever dare to vote in opposition to their landlords; and, during a very long period, it as little entered into the conceptions of the freeholders that they should risk "eviction,"—which was the one word for destruction and death,—by audaciously voting contrary to the will of the lords of the land.

At the election in 1826, when *Emancipation* was the popular electoral cry, and *Protestant Ascendancy*, the wish, if not the battle-shout, of the owners of estates, the ties between the latter and their tenants became suddenly loosed. There was an open and universal rebellion of the forty-shilling bondsmen, and their conduct drove some of their masters well-nigh mad. Up near Curraghmore, lay the old Marquis of Waterford, in a dying state, but easy in his mind touching one circumstance, the return of his brother, Lord George Beresford, for the borough of Curraghmore. The Marquis had returned his brother, again and again, without opposition. Indeed, had he been opposed, the freeholders would not have dreamed of supporting his adversary; and for such adversary to put in an appearance in the election time of 1826 was reckoned among things impossible. Lord George, himself, was popular, and the sole objection that his constituents could ever make against him,—and *that*, confidentially, to each other,—was that he was a staunch Protestant and invariably voted against the "Catholics." But that objection was the one peg on which the whole forty-shilling-freehold revolutionary movement depended; and to give practical force and application to it, an opponent to Lord George Beresford appeared in the very unwelcome person of Mr. Villiers Stewart.

Lord George could scarcely believe his senses; and the Marquis turned painfully in his bed, moved more by disgust at the audacity,

than by disquietude for the possible results. The forty-shilling free-holders had always followed their landlords, and would do so now. Lord George ceased to wonder, and the Marquis gradually fretted himself into a quiescent state of sulky confidence.

But it soon became apparent that not only every qualified tenant on his estate, but even all of his own servants who had the right of voting, would exercise their privilege against their lord and master. One by one,—canvassed by Lord George, or interrogated by the Marquis as he lay, feeble and querulous, on his bed,—one by one intimated that his vote would be given rather according to the bidding of the priest than according to that of the lord of the demesne. The Marquis was in sore dejection and misery, at the prospect of the downfall of his influence, when his eye fell, one day, on the person of his old huntsman, Manton. This much-honoured official had no leisure to trouble himself about politics or church service. If Heaven had made him a huntsman, it was his bounden duty to look after hounds and kennel, horses and stable, the beer-cellar and himself. He had a voice that rendered the wood-echoes musical, the pack jubilant, and Reynard panic-stricken. Old Manton had no will of his own; his will was his lord's, just as his forty-shilling freehold was. The Marquis had no doubt of this fact, as he saw the old huntsman standing at the threshold of the sick lord's chamber; and he bade his servant enter.

Manton obeyed, but not with such alacrity as usual, and as he thrust the handle of his riding-whip into his mouth, and looked sheepish and embarrassed, the Marquis almost distrusted the most faithful of his followers.

"Manton," said he, feebly, "you will not serve me as the rest are doing? You will vote for Lord George?"

"Well, my lord," answered Manton, with increasing embarrassment of manner, "you see—long life to your lordship!"

"Long life!" murmured the infirm peer, "alas!"

"You'll do well yet, my lord," said Manton; but as the Marquis pressed the all-important question, the huntsman grew more decided but not less respectful, and, without giving weight to the reflection that he was perilling both his place and freehold tenure, he exclaimed: "God bless you, my lord, whatever way things go! I'd go to the world's end to serve you in any other way but this; but you see, my lord, there's one thing I can't do at all. I can't vote against the old country and the old religion."

Local tradition says that this speech caused the old lord to burst into tears. His very henchman, as it were, had resolved to be treacherous. The humiliated peer was pierced to the heart, at the thought of how low the once powerful Beresfords had fallen, and of how little comparative importance they were in the eyes of their own dependants. The wounded pride would have been solaced, had Lord George triumphed, but such balm was not vouchsafed to the Marquis. Villiers Stewart was returned,

the defeat of the Beresfords was complete. Their influence, their *prestige*, was destroyed for ever, and the sick old peer took up his bed and walked. Ill as he was, he abandoned Curraghmore, and never again returned to the place where his rule had once been so unquestioned, but where it had now perished for ever.

The revolt of the forty-shilling freeholders is fully illustrated in this single incident ; but it was universal ; wherever it was necessary, they went against their landlords. By such action they carried Catholic emancipation ; and political gratitude was never so unpleasantly exemplified as in the fact that the candidates who were returned by their votes, acquiesced, in 1829, in the proposal to deprive them of their franchise. Such deprivation had become, perhaps, a political necessity. The freeholders were like the insect which, having delivered its sting, straightway expires.

Some of the few worthy members of the old Irish parliament were not exempt from political inconsistency. Curran himself, a great stickler for purity, affords us an example. He first entered the House of Commons in Dublin as the nominee of Mr. Longfield, who was subsequently Lord Longueville. Curran sat for Kilbeggan, but he stipulated that his action should be entirely unshackled, and that the patron of the borough should not presume to influence his vote. Mr. Longfield, looking upon the stipulation as a formality for the ease of Curran's conscience, consented. A time came, however, when the nominee's vote highly displeased the patron, and a quarrel ensued. Curran could not resign his seat, for Irish members had not then the opportunity which the stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds affords to legislators desirous of withdrawing from the responsibility of making laws. The honourable member for Kilbeggan, nevertheless, had a remedy for the difficulty. The independent Irish patriot offered to purchase a borough and a representative for it who should never vote but in accordance with Mr. Longfield's directions !

The candidates for seats in the parliament which had to pronounce on the question of the Union, were bound by strict pledges to their respective constituencies to vote for the country, whatever measure might be proposed. When these candidates became members, no one produced such mingled feelings of scorn and merriment as an obscure representative who offered to vote for the Union, on terms which he had put down in writing. The Government agreed to the terms, but refused to sign any written agreement. The member suspecting that this circumstance indicated treachery, made a violent speech *against* the Union. The last words were on his lips, when a treasury messenger placed in his hands the agreement he had required, duly signed and sealed. He glanced at it, concluded his adverse speech in the spirit in which he had begun it, and a few minutes after voted *for* the Union ! As many people laughed at as cried against this proceeding, which served Ireland better than it pleased Irishmen. But the vote, if we mistake not, obtained a peerage for him who gave it. The Government rewarded deeds and disregarded words.

How deeply the constituencies of the sister island felt and resented the conduct of such of their representatives as voted for the union of the kingdoms, may be traced in the legends and feelings which still linger in country localities. The bitterness of feeling, indeed, has lingered in other breasts than those of the common and easily-exasperated people. Grattan's son, himself a candidate for election, and some time a member of Parliament, was not ashamed, in his father's biography, to tickle the ears of Irish electors, by adding this awful passage to the literature of assassination :—"If two or three courtiers," he says, "had been killed, the Union might have been prevented. . . . However, these were not the olden times, as in Rome, when a patriot drew his sword and killed a magistrate; then, brandishing it, appealed to the people that he had slain a traitor. Unquestionably, Lord Clare and Lord Castlereagh deserved to die. . . . Some weak old woman might have called 'murder!' but it would have been the deed of a Brutus."

Here was a "sic semper tyrannis!" uttered to catch votes; but it hardly fell in with the spirit of electors. Of the old spirit of violence and of fun there is not much left; there perhaps survives more of the old spirit of the former than of the latter. Indeed, a spirit of real, downright fun never existed at all in Ireland. It is one of the patent mistakes of dramatists and novel-writers to exhibit the Irish Kelt as a *jolly* fellow. His nature is nearly the reverse; he is alternately fierce and desponding, and exceptionally madly gay. It is only in remote districts that a violent spirit still prevails, in a few landlords as well as in a few tenants. We have heard of one lord who, just before the recent election, threatened every tenant, who should fail to vote as his landlord would have him, with eviction. Such a threat may bring the utterer under a sentence of death, issued from a "Ribbon lodge;" and such a sentence is as sure to be carried out as doom itself. But this landlord is a dauntless and foreseeing man, and he is said to have made a will, whereby the legatee is directed, under certain penalties, and in case of the legator's death by violence, to evict every tenant from the estate who has voted against the landlord's directions and interests.

We may point to the riots at Nottingham at the end of June in the present year by way of proof that there is as much violence and as little fun in electioneering riots in England as there have ever been in Ireland. In the latter country the excessive interest which was once felt by a certain class of electors in the triumph of a particular candidate has ceased, and *that* for a particular reason. Although competitive examinations have neither crushed intrigue nor suppressed jobbery, they have been a great boon to Irish Members. Nearly every Irish elector used to pester the successful candidate for whom he had voted, for a place for his son, or some more distant kinsman. It is impossible to conceive the annoyance to which Irish Members were formerly exposed in this respect, and the downright lying to which it compelled them. To all similar applications now, they can put forth the simple truth, that no places are, in these days, acquired except by those competitive examinations.

For the last half century, another social improvement has been much to the benefit of candidates. No aspirant to legislative honours goes to the poll with the possibility of having to fight a duel, or wins an election with the almost certainty of having to stand fire. Duelling, as the resource of honourable men, received its first shock in Ireland in the year 1788, when Robert Keen met Nugent Reynolds and shot him dead as Reynolds was courteously raising his hat to him, before the time for firing. When Reynolds's second, Plunket, cried out against such "murder," Keen's second, his brother Henry, fired at him, with the remark, "If you don't like it, take that!" Robert Keen was very properly hanged for this cowardly assassination. Duelling, thenceforth, took so much the guise of murder that some honourable men who did not decline to go out, either fired in the air, or refused to fire at all, after receiving the shot of their adversary. In 1790, Hobart, the secretary to the Lord Lieutenant, on being called upon to return Curran's fire, simply asked if Mr. Curran was satisfied : "I regret, said the latter, that you have taken this advantage ; but you have made it impossible for me not to be satisfied."

Several years later, in 1815, the humane Major Hillas was challenged by one of the old class of "ruffianly gentlemen." The quarrel may have been aggravated by political antipathies, but its immediate cause arose out of a dissension touching a question of wreck and salvage. The major went to the ground in a full suit of mourning, and he was brave man enough to say to the assembled crowd :—"I am sorry that the mistaken laws of honour oblige me to come here and defend myself; and I declare to God I have no animosity to man or woman on the face of the earth." They cast lots for "first fire," and the devil, who is ever busy in these matters, gave it to Fenton. The same devil pointed Fenton's pistol, and Major Hillas was carried from the field a corpse. A year later, the great duellist Dillon, who in most of his "affairs" had had Ben Kane for his "friend," had the latter in front of him as principal, instead of at his side as second, and Dillon fell dead, nearly on the spot where his father, an accomplished duellist, had fallen dead before him. The immediate causes of many duels in Ireland were only the consequences of political antagonisms which had raged more or less violently at some previous election period. In those old election days in Ireland, there was nothing so common as loss of life—nothing so thoroughly enjoyed by the people as a public duel and much bloodshed. At the recent election, all people worthy of respect in the sister island were desirous that the contest of 1865 might pass over peaceably. How different this feeling is from that which prevailed in the last century, will best be shown by an extract from a private letter written at Newry in 1774 :—"Our election," says the writer, "goes on with the greatest spirit. Last night a poor fellow was killed, and four or five persons are in confinement for the murder."

Etna in Eruption.

ONE almost airless day in May last the yacht D—— sailed, or rather drifted, round the point of Taormina. Through the long hours of a sweltering morning, we who were on board had counted the minutes till that point should be turned, and till the flank of Etna should be displayed far enough to reveal the source of a long flat bank of smoke which hung a couple of thousand feet or so below the summit. When we at last came within view, four or five dark curls lazily winding upwards from the pine-forest to the smoke-bank were alone visible, a mere multiplication of what may be seen well nigh every day rising from the crater of Vesuvius. The disappointment was grievous; and in our haste we said that the eruption of Etna either had never been, or at least was a thing of the past. But that evening, while we were lounging sadly in the cabin, a sound for the moment inexplicable called us upon deck. Imagination transformed it afterwards into a muffled explosion; yet at the time it was not until after we had heard it once or twice repeated that it could be distinguished clearly from the noise made by the boom, checked suddenly by the sheet, as it swayed backward and forward in unison with the long roll of the vessel. Presently, however, the sound grew louder, its iteration became more frequent, and then as though a crust were broken through by a mighty effort came a sharp burst, and from out of a glow which reddened all the mountain side stones shot into the air, darting upwards for hundreds of feet, sometimes in masses and sometimes in succession, but by their size and the brilliancy of their light always distinct each from the other, even at the long distance of fifteen miles from which we were looking. For hours, at intervals varying from a few minutes to half-an-hour at a time, these bursts, followed by the flashing bouquets of stones, jarred the stillness of the night; but gradually they became rarer and less violent; and by the morning Etna had sunk again into apparent rest, and again the row of smoke-curls alone suggested a possible activity. We had seen enough, however, to compel a visit to the eruption, and a few mornings later we set out, four in number, from Catania by the coast road for Piedimonte, the town whence the craters and the lava stream are most easily reached.

The neighbourhood of Catania is a strange mixture of pleasant verdure and of ghastliness. No soil is more fertile than that formed by disintegrated lava, and the vast sides of Etna are belted round by forests of oak and chestnut, by fields of corn, by vineyards and olive groves, and by gardens thick with orange-trees and lemons. Round Catania itself is perhaps the very richest district of the whole region; in most directions every inch of

ground is cultivated, and the strength of the crops and their freedom from weeds attest at once the kindliness of the soil and the thoroughness of the hand-labour which is spent upon it ; while nature, forbidden to riot in the open spaces, covers in her exuberance the road-sides, the fragments of waste ground, and even the walls, with a mantle of many-coloured flowers, and contrives to nourish apricots and olives out of the same earth which produces flax and wheat. Suddenly after miles of this bewildering colour, oppressive to the eye in its brilliancy, the traveller will come upon a tract of ashes, into which he sinks ankle-deep, where the trees are sticks, and the thinness of the vegetation shows the newness of its existence ; or, as can be seen within a mile of the city itself, he may find himself in a harsh waste of lava unsoftened by the wear of nearly six centuries, and still a mere stream of slag crawled over here and there by an atrophied prickly pear yellow for lack of nourishment ; and sometimes even from among the densest masses of plants a curious pinnacle of lava, woed in vain by convolvulus or by vine, will jut forth to take all brightness out of the landscape by its incapacity to receive either light or shadow on its leaden surface. But it is in the closely strewn villages that there is most of volcanic grimness. The houses are chiefly built of lava, and nothing can exceed in ghastliness the sombre effect of blue-black walls and blue-black pavement, except the effort which the churches and the houses of more pretension make to be cheerful by having their larger surfaces white-washed, and restraining the use of lava to the corners and to the edges of the windows. Somehow these churches and houses affect the mind much as do the skeletons which, arranged in gay dresses, grin in rows of glass cases along the walls of vaults under the Capuchin monasteries of Sicily. Fortunately, there is one road along which the towns and villages, from being built of a warm yellow tufa, avoid this dreariness of aspect ; and it was this which, after crossing the still barren lava of 1381, we pursued along the coast and past Aci Reale towards the town nearest to the scene of eruption. The journey is long ; and it was not till the evening that the apparition of our carriage drew all the women of Piedimonte to their windows, and attracted all the men in our wake till we stopped opposite the café and gossiping centre of the little town. Piedimonte is distant four miles of hill from the post-road, and though, strangely enough for Sicily, it can be reached itself by carriage, the carriage-road soon ceases beyond. It has no inn, however mean ; and probably, until the eruption broke out, the only event in its history was the passage through it of a foreigner once in a generation. It is easy therefore to imagine how many hands grasped the handle of the carriage door, how many tongues screamed salutation, how many questions — or rather it is not easy to imagine the number of questions which poured in a continuous cataract into uncomprehending ears, and by what surging waves of men we were borne into the café. It is hard to guess what might have been our fate at the hands of those well-intentioned but somewhat lively Sicilians, had we not fortunately brought a letter to an

obliging inhabitant of the place, a certain Don Antonio Mafaraci, who with vast good nature has devoted himself to the calling of amateur lodging finder, horse hirer, and general expedition organizer for the strangers who have invaded Piedimonte in no small quantity during the winter and spring. He was in the café at the moment, and straightway, before I had half finished my self-introductory speech, seized me by both hands, wrung them violently, tucked my arm under his—a ceremony which, so far as my experience serves, a Sicilian always goes through when he intends to be particularly kind—and just by way of getting possession of me to his own sole behoof, for like every one else he was too excited by the coming of a batch of new strangers to talk at first, marched into the street, where he hurried up and down speechless, but tenderly nursing my arm. He soon recovered himself, and presently carried me off to see the place where we should remain for the hour or two which intervened between then and the time at which we ought to start. The street was at this time nearly blocked in front of the café, and as I went away I heard the same continuous questions waxing louder and louder in the vain attempts of the crowd to overcome the deafness which seemed to them the only intelligible reason for the silence of my friends. When we were fairly ensconced in our lodgings, things were little better. To wash was impossible; our clothes could only be surreptitiously changed; the doors were permanently occupied by reliefs of men; the women, with more boldness, filed uninterruptedly through the rooms, veiling their curiosity under proffers of service; and the children simply climbed upon the beds, and stayed there till our toilettes were finished, and the interest was transferred to the dinner-table. In short, four commonplace foreigners excited almost as much curiosity, in a town within sight of steamers which pass well nigh every day, as is said to be displayed in nooks of the world where Europeans have never been seen before. All this might be amusing, but was inconvenient; still, the memory which will connect itself longest with the people of Piedimonte is that of their kindness, so honest, so active, and so frank—a kindness, by the way, that, whatever their fault in other respects, the country-folks of Southern Italy always keep ready for the stranger whom they have not been so unfortunate as to rob before they have had the opportunity of making his acquaintance.

The time of our rest affords a natural break, and I may be permitted therefore to use the opportunity in giving some notices of the topography of the eruption. Etna is, as every one knows, an isolated mountain, almost absolutely circular in plan, and of vast size. From its base, eighty-seven miles in circumference, its sides rise in a nearly regular slope to an undulating plateau of considerable extent, about a thousand feet below the top of the cone, which springs immediately from it. One exception there is to the even course of ascent, where the great trough of the Val del Bove, partly boring into the mountain and partly hewn out of its side, presents its more abrupt walls to the sea. Otherwise the contour is only varied by an infinity of minor cones, some insignificant, others claiming the dignity of

considerable hills, which are scattered all round in certain numbers, but which lie chiefly on the southern face. These mark the seats of successive eruptions—for the great cone itself, though always smoking, is rarely the source of any great lava current—and by their curious appearance, like limpets on a rock, as well as by the variety of their colour, sometimes strong red, sometimes ashen grey, sometimes green from abundant verdure, impart its distinctive character to the mountain. The most destructive lava floods have run from those which look in the direction of Catania, but the rearward face of the mountain, no doubt, from the comparative thinness of the walls of the crater towards the east, is that which has been most frequently ravaged, and the last eruption which threatened the southern slopes broke out above Nicolosi in 1780. Since then the centre of activity seems to have permanently shifted to the north-east, relieving itself generally through the Val del Bove, and now, in this last eruption, from craters situated on a sort of rudimentary ridge which follows a north-easterly line towards the sea from the north-eastern corner of the plateau. These craters are at an elevation of about six thousand feet—that is to say, close upon the upper limit of the pine-forests, and being on the crest of the ridge, can pour their lava to the east, or by a nearly northerly path, towards the towns of Linguagrossa and Piedimonte, which however the stream has never yet approached. It was on the night of the 30th January that the eruption began, after a series of warnings given at intervals since the month of July, 1863, by the opening of a fissure a mile and a half long, from which burst the contents of the choking mountain with extraordinary rapidity of movement. During the first six days the lava ploughed its way in an easterly direction, through the forest, at the rate of twenty feet in the minute, falling at one place over a rock in a cataract of liquid fire; and though after a while its pace diminished sensibly, it had yet traversed fully nine miles by the middle of February. Towards the end of March the lava had ceased to move, and the action of the craters, which now formed the centres of distinct cones, seemed to be suspended, when suddenly a fresh stream gushed forth with new violence, and ran due north towards Piedimonte. It was the latter stream which was still moving in May, and it was this accordingly that we visited. By reason of the quantity of lava which has been disgorged, no less than because of its duration, this eruption must be ranked among those of the severest class. Owing, however, to its position so high up on the mountain side, and to the distance which the lava had to travel before it could reach cultivated ground, it has as yet inflicted no damage commensurate with its seriousness, and probably will die out before any cultivated ground has been reached by the second current at any rate. Some, though not much, cultivation was destroyed by the original easterly river.

The existence of a natural curiosity has always a somewhat amusing effect upon the minds of the people in its neighbourhood. They begin by endowing it with mysterious and awful attributes. They elevate it to the position of a fetish ; then, when they find that it can be approached with-

out death, when familiarity has even dissipated terror, instead of casting it from its throne, they assume rather that peculiar privileges attach to the fact of neighbourhood, that strangers can only venture near with safety after the performance of many rites, and even so only with circumspection and in the company of many privileged ones. But there is a method in this madness. Personal and local vanities are flattered, and a door is opened besides to the inflow of much solid gain. It would have been too much to expect the good folks of Piedimonte to have been the sole exception to so unvarying a rule. Nor were they. To each man were to be his guide and his horse, and to each guide his mule; men were to go with lanterns before, men were to follow with provisions after; men were to come before and after because it seemed good unto them. We were to start at ten o'clock at night. Strange penalties, the more terrible that they were entirely unexplained, were to be incurred if we set forth later, and equally strange risks were to be met if we did not bivouack for the last hours of darkness in the gloom of a pine-wood, where we were threatened notwithstanding with a couple of hours of intense cold. Between this complexity in the arrangements and the multitude of our followers, we fully understood, as we filed out of Piedimonte, that we were engaged upon an expedition of much seriousness; nor did the wild aspect of the party tend to weaken the idea. The narrow path by which we began to mount the hill-side lay in utter obscurity between the high walls which enclosed it on either hand; but the slanting moonlight, as it trickled through the trees, flecked here and there a horse's head, just revealed what seemed like great packs fastened to the saddles, and showed in high relief against the grey green light the forms of a long line of men, some in cloaks and losty peaked hoods, others in jackets and sombreros, others again in low sailor-like hats, all alike picturesque and disreputable-looking; men who might have been well taken for a gang of smugglers, and the more so for the silence which pervaded the party and the guides, apparently from choice as between the latter, and as between them and ourselves because of the impossibility of understanding the Sicilian dialect.

The picturesqueness of the scene increased rather than diminished as we passed out of the cultivated tract into the oak and pine forests of the upper mountain; but our enjoyment decreased in inverse proportion to the call for its exercise. Among their many assumptions, our good friends had chosen to assume that Englishmen cannot ride; so as they only possessed one saddle in all the town, instead of putting under us rugs and sacks, they had laden the horses' backs with monstrous edifices of wood, used ordinarily for piling goods on, and then they had induced us, much protesting, to mount. They were frameworks covered with sacking, some two feet and a half across, square and flat-topped. Riding crosswise, there was no imaginable position in which the legs could be placed which relieved them from the pressure of ruthless edges, or which could save the thighs from being stretched sideways at right angles to the body, a gymnastic attitude apparently easy to clowns in a circus, but

emphatically disagreeable to men without special education. In daylight the natives avoid the difficulty by riding after the fashion of women; but at night in a pine-forest we found the results of imitating them too serious in practice, and resigned ourselves to necessity till the torture compelled one after another to drop off his horse and exchange misery for the comparative happiness of stumbling over tree-roots, floundering into streams, and falling prostrate over rocks. Generally we felt our way through utter gloom; but here and there, where the leafage was not too close to admit a few rays of light, glows of unnatural red penetrated sparingly; and once we looked down an open valley, to where at the end the trees stood out darkly against a flare of brilliant flame-colour, which rising from the lava-stream interposed itself between us and the lower sky. At length, at about two in the morning, we reached the most sombre spot of all the forest, where the ashen soil had drifted into hillocks, which had solidified through ages, and between which were narrow scoops densely roofed by pines, the bare trunks of which shot up unbranching for fifty or sixty feet. Here, in a nook sheltered from the wind, we halted till the first gleams of sunrise should enable us to clamber over the older lava, which had cooled by exposure during some months to the atmosphere. Groping by the dim light of lanterns, we collected materials for a fire, round which we all cast ourselves in a great circle, and soon for the most part sank in heavy sleep, spite of the weird beauty of the scene,—blackness that could be felt, except where the fitful light of the fire darted here and there amongst the huge trunks, and where through one small space above the stars shone from behind a lurid veil; in spite too of the loud thunders of the mountain, which now seemed to roll from immediately by us.

By half-past three the lurid tinge in the sky began to give place to a cooler light, and we at once put ourselves in movement. To have waited longer would have been to abandon the very object of our night journey—the sight of the craters before daylight should have dulled the full grandeur of their fires. During the few minutes which the dawn required to sink from the upper heavens to the earth about us, we clambered over beds of black snow, parted from each other by ridges of ash, till suddenly on cresting one of the latter a view broke upon us which, among the not few unusual views presented to me at different times by my good fortune, remains certainly one of the most marvellous. On one side the Mediterranean in perfect calm stretched out into infinity, except where the long silhouette of the Calabrian hills, by their sweeping outline rather adding to than taking from the repose of the sea and air, rose in misty grey against the pale citron of the cloudless sky. On the other, the snowy head of Etna, just visible over its massive shoulders, was touched already by the to us unrisen sun, and shone with transparent rose-colour, which was repeated more faintly on the steam floating gently upwards from its top. On either side the most exquisite repose; but in the centre, right before us, and not a quarter of a mile away, a hideous misshapen lump shut out half the sky, which

was darkened far above and around by rushing volumes of red smoke and by darting curls of steam. From the side of this cone, broken down at the part nearest to us, shot upwards volleys of stones and flame, which, from the speed with which it was projected, was simply a straight-edged sheet of flame. Between us and the crater lay a waste of fresh lava, still sending forth jets of steam and quivering gas from every pore, leaden in its colour, and fantastic in its shapes, as is molten lead when thrown into water. Partly this had flowed from the crater over against us, partly from two others, one then quiescent, the second more active than that which was nearest to us, and both some distance further towards the upper slopes of the mountain.

Far away to the left the united streams could be traced down a channel more than a mile in breadth, which they had cut through the forest, till turning a corner they precipitated themselves to a lower level in an ugly travesty of an ice-fall. The immediate foreground was occupied by the abrupt edge of the lava, bordered with burnt and half-burnt trees, some standing erect with every shred of foliage singed off them, some felled, cut round the bottom by the lava precisely as if by beavers. We sat long looking, but the first impression was the most vivid; and as the morning grew, the effect of the eruption itself diminished greatly. Wonderful in truth as the scene was to us, it must have been far more terrible to those who saw it earlier in the year. Then the spot where we stood in thorough safety was swept by frequent volleys; and if our guides spoke truth, stones were hurled seven hundred yards or more in perpendicular height. The violence of the discharge from the crater had been for some time lessening, and in addition it varied much from day to day, even from hour to hour. In the night when we had sailed past, the eruption had for a time equalled in intensity its first vigorous gush; but on the morning when we came to the spot it was perhaps almost at its lowest point; and though during the first few minutes of our stay some tremendous explosions took place, they soon declined, and grew milder and milder continuously till we left. There was however enough to let us see thoroughly how a volcano works, and imagination could easily make the noise more deafening, increase the volume of flame, enlarge the stones, and throw them somewhat higher and farther. The imagination, for that matter, could almost in some things exaggerate the burning of a great warehouse into the eruption of a volcano; the flame and the smoke are there, and at the moment when the roof falls in the perpendicular burst upwards might give a faint notion of the manner in which the fire shoots from the crater; and though there is no equivalent for the close column of stones which is thrown up in the latter case, the beams cast hither and thither might distantly suggest the stray blocks which, instead of falling again into the gulf, are hurled outside to distances sometimes small and sometimes great. But that for which in common fires there is no analogy, however remote, is the regularity with which the phenomena repeat themselves; a regularity

which suggests the idea that there is a great system of arteries within the earth, filled with running fire in place of blood, that one of the arteries has been eaten into by the progress of some horrid superficial tumour, and that with every pulsation of the great heart of the mountain its life spouts forth through the wound, as blood from the carotid artery of a man. A certain amount of fire, a certain number of stones, always issue from the crater; but once a minute sometimes, sometimes more often, a great gush leaps for several hundreds of feet into the air with hardly any warning to the eye, and sinks as suddenly again. It is then that the larger stones are disgorged, in the midst of a cloud of lesser ones which play up and down in the flame like the balls of which street acrobats keep five or six in the air at once. If, however, these gushes take place without much notice to the eye, they are preluded at least to the ear by a hoarse roar like that made when flame is borne along in a confined space by a fierce draught, except that it includes besides a noise which is indescribable, but which declares itself at once to be that of the stones as they grind against one another in their helpless rush to the surface. The same noise, but with nothing of volcanic vehemence, can be heard when the stones of a beach are dragged about by angry waves.

After a while we attempted to clamber over the lava in the direction of the craters, but little was to be gained by going nearer, and we found the walking so disagreeable that we soon returned. In some places a coating of ashes overlay the lava, and let the feet through into traps set with unpleasantly sharp corners. In others the surface was composed of loose fragments which had cracked off in cooling, or of crusts so thin that they gave way under the foot. To get on at all it was necessary to steady oneself with the hands, which were often scratched, and even cut, in simply taking hold of the projecting bits. But in abandoning the lava at this point we by no means limited our view of the eruption to the mere action of the crater; the most interesting part of the visit was yet to come. In the first liquid rush of the second current the lava issuing first from two, and then from all three craters, had flowed rapidly for about five miles, and then owing to some lull in the internal action which diminished the supply had slackened its pace, and finally ceased to move altogether. A short time afterwards, however, when the first lava had cooled too much to be pushed forward by any impulse from behind, the workings of the mountain recommenced, and a fresh river poured itself over the old stream, the outside of which had become hard and even solid. This new outflow had in turn begun to cool in the neighbourhood of the craters; and had it been more easy to reach it than was in fact the case, we should have found it little different from what we had already seen. Its lower end however nearly coincided with the foot of the original stream; there it was readily accessible, and there at the spot from which we had seen issue the red light down the valley in the pine-forest, it was still moving at the rate of about a hundred feet in the day. Thither accordingly we went, passing on our road a curious little secondary

branch, which on its turning aside into a valley had been barred egress on every hand, and in a vain attempt to force its way out had hoisted itself some distance up the slope in front of it. It had obviously got there when just so solid that the fore part could not flow back over that which was behind on arriving at the hill, and when just so liquid that, while viscous enough to hold together, it yet offered little resistance to the impulse of the oncoming body.

Not much further on we came in presence of the actually flowing lava stream itself. Essentially the scene was much more striking than that which we had already witnessed. The latter owed much to the contrast of the landscape, still more to the happy accident of the pure morning light. The former had a more terrible grandeur of its own—one which needed nothing to add to it, and which nothing could have lessened. For a mile, it was said, in width, and to an uncertain length of which a mile and a half might be visible, stretched a mass of lava, over the greater part of the colour of black lead. The extreme edge of the front was twenty or thirty feet high; it was not broken into distorted forms, like the edge higher up, but rose gradually in layers like those into which over-thick paste settles in being poured into a cup, showing to the first glance in how fluid a state it had been. A few hundred feet further back was a second stage, composed of the lava of the new stream, which overlay the entirety of the first lava, and spread besides in shallow depth outside the former margin. This, unlike the other, was tossed into pinnacles, one mass of wild incoherent formlessness in detail, yet defining with perfect accuracy the contour of the underlying earth, as the deposit upon petrified flowers defines their form. From its face came no smoke and little steam; but sulphurous gas, like in appearance to that from a limekiln, rendered every shape uncertain, and quivered so densely in the hollows as to merge all substance in a dancing haze, destitute of colour. Along the border of this lava was a sloping wall of red, some ten or fifteen feet high. At first sight it seemed to be stationary; then gradually the eye caught a movement of objects on its surface, of stones, or bits of solid lava, fallen from the hardened top, and at last it could be seen to lap slowly on with even motion, licking under it with absolute indifference to size or kind whatever lay in its course. This slow, silent, never-ceasing lapping of the lava gave a sense of irresistible power, like that conveyed by the action of a slotting machine, which cuts into the thickest iron like a conscious being doing a thing unconsciously because of its insignificance; and at the same time it excited a feeling at once of repulsion and of fascination, as do the movements of a snake, probably from the absence of the noise and of the outward evidence of effort which are the usual concomitants of motion. Something horrible there was too in the lightlessness of the red. Except where some bit, bulging too rapidly, tumbled off and exposed the more glowing red of the inside, the aspect of the fused portion was just as gloomy as that of the cooled surface.

If the effect of the lava in itself was grand, there was nothing in the accessories to attenuate the impression which it produced. Here and there on an island of higher earth a pine-tree stood yet in the midst of the flood, otherwise nothing but the belt of forest and the sky troubled by the exhalations from the lava. Here too we rested long, and while we stayed several trees were reached, scorched, then lit, and finally consumed; one huge fir, which threw its branches out at too high a point to be touched, was being gnawed into gradually at about three feet from the ground when we left. Before long that too must have fallen, and must have shared the fate of its brethren. It was perfectly possible, in spite of the intense heat thrown out by the moving portion, to approach near enough to thrust sticks into the burning lava; but the doing so was much like standing in front of a smelting furnace at the moment of its being opened.

We fulfilled our duty as tourists by going through this perfectly objectless and uninstructive ceremony, which had not even, as lava flows at a regular pace, the merit of the slightest danger; and then we departed. It would be a curious subject of speculation to endeavour to find out how the tourist mind first conceived the idea of a moral wrong being involved in the omission to broil eggs in lava holes, to hear echoes, to whisper in whispering-galleries, and to see the private rooms of palaces. Eggs broiled in lava holes eat just like eggs broiled out of lava holes; all echoes are alike; and the private rooms of palaces only differ from other private rooms in being much less comfortable. Nevertheless, to leave out the doing, hearing, and seeing these things would be to most tourists to leave out the cardinal adventures of a trip; and the natives everywhere soon appreciate the fact, and insist upon all strangers, whether of tourist mind or not, going through the ceremonies which they have found to be so attractive to some. It was not worth while to explain at large how foolish it was to put sticks into the lava to be set alight while we were looking at big trees in the act of burning, so we resigned ourselves by the same act to scorch our faces and to gratify our guides.

Our descent presented little of fresh interest. It was like a walk through any other South Italian wood, except that the trees were beyond the usual size. In this part the forest was composed of oaks, many of them very old and gnarled; the ground undulated in its descent, and was besides much broken; withal the foregrounds, bright with the beginnings of spring foliage, which there at the height of five thousand feet does not sprout much earlier than in England, were diverse in the extreme, and all lovely. Opposite, beyond the valley which skirts Etna on the northern side, were the rugged hills which form the lower ranges of the great mountain ridge of the island; sometimes the valley itself, with Piedimonte and Linguagrossa nestling in their olives, opened through a gap; and sometimes, still further to the east, the eye fell over the shelf on which the former town stands, to the sparkling surface of the Mediterranean, caught the promontory of Taormina, and wandered far away to

the Cape of Spartivento and the heights of Aspromonte. As we came lower down, the oak-wood merged in corn, and that by a sudden drop in the walled olive-groves and garden-like enclosures of the valley, among which our scorched white road lay to Piedimonte.

The whole expedition consumed precisely twelve hours, but the halt by the fire was needless; and if the eruption continues, and any reader of this paper should care to repeat the excursion for himself in the shorter days of October, he will find that he may start fully two hours later than we did, with the certainty of being at the point from which the craters are seen at sunrise—undoubtedly the best time, unless the eruption is very violent indeed—and with the further certainty of being again in Piedimonte by ten or half-past ten at latest, after having had ample time for seeing or even for examining. The people of the place, as usual, exaggerate immensely the time necessary, and are themselves extremely slow. At night they, or rather the horses, must be allowed to set the pace; but in daylight I found that it was only two hours' fair walking down hill from the lava stream to the town. I had stayed behind for upwards of an hour to sketch, and easily overtook the rest of the party outside Piedimonte; with grievous distress, however, to the guide who remained with me to show the road. If a tolerable walker could be found to act as guide, any one who chose to go by day, which in many respects would be the most enjoyable time, could do so in six hours and a half of actual walking.

Andrea Ferara.

"Slicing swords, broad, thinne, and of an excellent temper." *

WHAT was the age and country of Andrea Ferara? This is a question which has excited and disappointed the antiquaries of Scotland and England for more than half a century. The inquiry interested Sir Walter Scott through great part of his literary life, was vainly followed by Sir Samuel Meyrick, and occupied the Deputy-Keeper of the Records in Edinburgh during a critical examination of the Chamberlain's and Treasurer's accounts, and all the documents of the Register House likely to have included the entry of payments to the celebrated swordmaker.

These researches were undertaken in consequence of the popular belief that Andrea had visited Scotland—a supposition, however, only founded upon the number of his blades extant in this kingdom, from which it was gratuitously assumed that they had been especially manufactured for Scottish use and within the realm. Originally, however, Ferara's blades were no less common in all the Western and Southern countries of Europe, while the broad-sword was a popular arm, and only in later periods became more numerous in Scotland, because this weapon was retained among the Highlanders and Borderers for more than a hundred years after it had disappeared in other nations before the rapier and the small-sword; but in the armouries of Spain, Italy, and Germany, especially in the two former regions, the number of Ferara's blades still bear witness to their ancient prevalence.

The belief being established that the great master had visited Scotland, it was suggested by Sir Walter Scott that he was one of the various foreign artificers invited by James V. to improve the arts and manufactures of his country.† This supposition was very generally received, but no evidence was discovered for its confirmation. Meanwhile, the country of the fabricator remained no less doubtful than his period, for though his surname is one of those derived from nativity or domiciliation, there are towns of Ferara in Spain,‡ as well as the ducal metropolis in

* Sir JOHN HAYWARD: *Life and Raigne of King Edward the Sixth.* 4to. Lond. 1630, p. 30.

† *Pitscottie Chron.* 8vo. Edin. 1814, ii. 407.

‡ In the provinces of Lerida, Coruña, and Oviedo. Madoz: *Geog. Espan.* The name is often written indifferently, Farrera, Ferraria, and Feraria, but this does not affect its identity with Farara. For the Italian city is also given as Ferara, Farara, and Ferare, and all these forms are only examples of the universal uncertainty of orthography in the middle ages, to which the name of the swordmaker was equally subject, appearing on his blades as Ferara, Ferrara, Farara, and Farrara.

Italy; and thus it was uncertain in which of these cities the family of the swordmaker had its origin. From some unknown bias, however, in Scotland, the popular belief was wholly directed to Spain, though apparently this preference had no better foundation than the popular intercourse of the Highlands with that country in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the general celebrity associated with the blades of Bilboa, Toledo, and Valencia, which in later times had superseded the more ancient renown of the once pre-eminent "Milan steel;" but whatever the cause for the nativity imputed to Ferara, a tradition current in the West Highlands explains not only his Celtiberian origin, but the event through which he visited Scotland.

According to this history, Ferara was a Spanish artist, and in the height of his celebrity had an apprentice, who was an excellent workman, and possessed a high spirit of emulation to perfect his skill in the service of so great a master; his ambition, however, was disappointed by a habitude of Andrea, that when the blades were in a certain stage of forging, he excluded the workmen, and locked the door of the atelier while he performed some unknown operation, after which he again admitted the assistants to finish the blades which were in progress. The apprentice was persuaded that this seclusion concealed some occult process which essentially affected the perfection of the arms. Anxious to possess this important secret, upon the first absence of his master, he bored a hole in the door of the atelier, and at the next occasion when he and his fellows were excluded, returned alone to the smithy, and applying his eye to the prepared orifice, discovered his master in the act of drawing a heated blade from the forge. The lad watched with suspended breath. Ferara laid the red steel on the anvil, and taking from a bench a small tin like a flour-dredge, rapidly covered the glowing metal with a coat of white powder, which he then hammered into the iron until it was cold, when he again returned it to the fire, and having given the proper degree of heat, repeated the same operation of powdering and hammering on the other side of the blade. This process was performed in succession upon all the weapons then in progress, until the whole being completed Ferara laid down his hammer and turned towards the door. The varlet perceived that the mystery was at an end, and dreading to be surprised, abandoned his eylet-hole, and fled to his companions, with whom he was immediately recalled to continue their vocations. The apprentice exulted in his discovery, but he could not boast with the ancient sage—"My secret is my own;" and it escaped among his companions. These youths, being less ambitious to emulate the skill of their master than to vaunt the possession of his mystery, their disclosures were soon repeated to Ferara, and one day, when the inquisitive apprentice was alone in the smithy, Andrea entered in a tempest of wrath, and loaded him with reproaches for having betrayed the secret of his art. The young man replied with intemperance; and in the heat of their altercation Ferara struck him on the head with a hammer which he had in his hand, and laid him senseless

at his feet; the blow was fatal, and to avoid pursuit for the homicide, Andrea fled the country, and escaped into France, from whence, in an itinerant exercise of his profession—not uncommon in the middle ages, and still continued in the *Wanderschaft* of Germany—he passed the sea into Scotland.

Whether there is any truth in this tradition, or whether it is a passage in the life of some other eminent armourer confounded with that of Ferara, will now perhaps never be known, but in the secret operation attributed to this artist there is a singular coincidence with two practical facts—the one in the ordinary manufacture of iron, the other in the operation of the ancient sword-blades of Damascus. In the former carbon and silica are mixed with the ore in the furnace. "The carbon combines with the oxygen of the iron, and escapes in the form of carbonic acid gas, while the silica unites with the lime," which is also present in the furnace, "and forms a kind of fluid glass or scoria which protects the iron from the action of the atmosphere."* In the manufacture of the Damascus scimitars, one of the operations for producing the finest blades was to sprinkle the steel while red hot with diamond and ruby dust, and to hammer the powder into the metal.† This process has been ridiculed by an eminent experimenter for the "ignorant" extravagance "which used" diamond-dust for carbon, and ruby for alumina or silica;‡ but Sir Isaac Newton discovered that diamond is the purest carbon, and ruby is known to combine a mixture of alumina with a large proportion of the finest silica. It is therefore probable that the operation of the Damascus smiths was founded in a sensibility of these principles, and that, far from the result of "ignorance," it was derived from that profound knowledge of chemistry in which the Saracens had been the masters of the Western world. Whether, however, the operation was efficacious or vain, is not a question here, where we have only to consider the coincidence between the Damascus and the reputed Spanish process. That they were identical in matter as in formula, may however be doubtful, from the improbability that a medium so costly as jewel-dust could have been commanded by a trans-Pyrenean smith. The identity of operation, however, is unequivocal, and this community in facts is enhanced by a community of origin in the arts of the operators; for all the chemistry of Spain was derived from the Moors, and these were only the Western line of the Saracens, who were equally the parent stock of the mediæval Syrians; and though the Spanish artist should not have used diamond and ruby dust, he might—as suggested by the British critic—have substituted the simpler elements of the same principles, carbon in the forge, and silica and alumina in "the white powder" amalgamated on the anvil.

In these considerations we have received the operation attributed to

* WILKINSON'S *Engines of War*, p. 224.

† Arabic MS. in the Rzewusky Library. By an erratum in WILKINSON'S *Engines of War*, p. 211, the title of the eminent orientalist is given as "Rzwrzchi."

‡ WILKINSON'S *Engines of War*, p. 211.

Ferara without any relation to his nationality; partly because the circumstantial evidence of the tradition indicates a verity in fact—partly, that whatever the nativity of the operator, he might at some period of his life have wrought in the forges of Spain,* or, as before said, that the legend may have originated with another master, and become associated with Ferara by one of those various transmigrations which sometimes confound the personages of oral record; but whether the story applied to Andrea or to another, we have now to show that in the height of his profession he was established at the town of Belluno in Friuli, an ancient duchy of Illyria, which in 1420 was added to Venice; and though in the succeeding year the eastern portion was seized by Austria, the city of Belluno and the remaining territory continued under the dominion of the Doges until 1797. The evidence of Ferara's domiciliation in this province is contained in a chapter upon the most renowned swordmakers of Italy in the sixteenth century—part of a once highly esteemed military treatise, published at Venice in 1585; and as the account illustrates the celebrity of the artist by showing the pre-eminence of the masters with whom he was associated, we shall give the text without diminution:—

“LAME DA SPADE, STOCCHE, PUGNALI, ET ARME DA INSTARE.

“Se la cogitatione de i luoghi et de i maestri de me discritta sin' hora sarà puntograta, et di qualchi commodità a tutti soldati, maggiormente, sarà questa ad ogni altra qualità di persone, le quali tal sorte d'armi sogliono essercitare como sono spade, spadone, stocche, cortelazzi et mazze di cavalli, con pugnali et arme da inastare d'ogni sorte che si usano. De i maestri delle quali uolendo alcuno sapere il nome tralasciando molti, mi restringero ne i più eccellente che se retrouino; et de i luoghi et paesi lasciando adietro la grandissima Alemagna, la Francia, et nella Spagna la famoso Valenza, dove si trouano infinite armi d'ogni sorte: uerro all' Italia, alla quale daremo con ogni ragione il pregio et uanto di quest' arte. Et primieramente diremo di Milano, cioè nel castello si lauorano perfetissimi lauori di lame da spade et pugnali, et di diuersi altre marie sorti de lame, che sono di buone et finissime tempre. Di Brescia non mi estenderò molto, ma solo tocando il nome di due fratelli, ambi maestri sopra ogn' altro eccellentissimi, i quali sono Simone et Serafino, figlioli & heredi del famoso et tanto celebrato Maestro Serafino, che faceua lame con tempre miracolose, et di esso si dice che fece una spada a un gran Principe, di tanta eccellenza, che gli dono in pagamento meglio di cinquecento ducati, oltre altre infinite marauiglie che di esso si raccontano. In un' altro luogo chiamato Gron sul' territorio Bergamasco, si retrouano alcuni ualentii maestri, et si chiamano quelli di Abram, che hanno bonissimo nome in quest' arte: della quale ancora perfetissimamente si lauoro in Saraualle, et Ciudal de Bellun, luogi del Friuli, ne i quale si trouano ualentissime maestri d'ogni sorte; cioè in Saraualle, Maestro Pegin da Feltran, huomo famosissimo et raro, il quale alle sue fornaci fa lauorieri miracolosissimi, & in Ciudal di Bellun sono gli ingegnosi Maestro Giouan Donato et Maestro *Andrea de i Ferari*, ambidue fratelli, i quali stanno alle fusine di Messer Giouan Battista detto il Barcelone. Nel territorio Vicintino, al Monte della Madonna, a canto il fiume Reron, u'è un ualentissimo huomo detto Maestro Lorenzo da Formigano, soprannominato 'il Zotto'; questo ha buonissima fama, & fa cose d'arme marauiglosose di bellezza et bontà.”†

* In this alternative presumption, it is to be observed that the tradition defines only the operative domiciliation, and not the nationality of Ferara; that he was a “Spanish artist,” but not that he was a *native of Spain*.

† GIOVAN MATTHEO CIGOGNA. *Trattato Militare*: 4to, Venetia, 1583, fol. 62.

"Though the knowledge of the places and the masters described by me, will be principally interesting to soldiers, it will also be acceptable to every other condition of persons, who are accustomed to exercise such arms as swords, broad-swords, rapiers, cutlasses, horsemen's maces, poniards, and damascined arms of all the kinds which are in use. Of those masters of whom it may be desired to know the names, omitting many in the illustrious Germany, France, and in Spain the famous Valencia, where are found numerous arms of every sort, I shall confine myself to the most excellent, with their places and countries, in Italy; to which, with every reason, we will give the pre-eminence and boast in this art. And first we will speak of Milan, where in the castle are wrought most perfect works in blades of swords, and poniards, and divers other various sorts of blades, which are of good and finest temper. Of Brescia I will not relate much, only touching the names of two brothers—both masters above all others the most excellent, and who are Simone and Serafino, sons and heirs of the so much celebrated Master Serafino who made blades of miraculous temper, and of whom it was said that he made a sword for a great Prince of such excellence, that he gave him in payment better than five hundred ducats, besides other infinite marvels which are told of him. In another place called Gron, on the territory of Bergumasco, are found some valiant masters called Abram, who have a very good name in their art, which also is wrought most perfectly in Saravalle, and in the town of Belluno, places in Friuli, in which are found excellent masters of every sort; that is, in Serravalle, Master Pegin da Feltran, a very famous and rare man, who, in his forges, makes miraculous works; and in the town of Belluno are the ingenious Masters Giovan Donato and *Andrea de Ferara*, both brothers, of the foundry of Master Giovan Battista, called 'the Barcelonian.' Of the territory of Vicentino, at Monte della Madonna, on the bank of the Rezon, is a most valiant man called Master Lorenzo da Formignano, called by sobriquet 'the Dolt,' who has the best fame, and makes marvellous arms for beauty and for excellence."

The date of this notice gives an approximate indication for the period of Ferara's birth, for since he is associated with the swordmakers of the greatest celebrity in the year 1585, such eminence could scarcely have been attained under the age of thirty years; from whence it may be assumed that he was born about the year 1555. The question of his country, however, may still be liable to the cavil, that as his master Giovani Battista was named "the Barcelonian," and, therefore, evidently a Spaniard, it may be conjectured that the brothers, Giovan Donato and Andrea Ferara, were brought by him to Italy. This supposition, however, is expressly contradicted by the author of the treatise, in the declaration that he forbore to mention the artists of Germany, France, and Spain, and restricted his celebration to those of Italy alone. The notice of "the Barcelonian" is no exception of this rule, since he is only introduced incidentally as the master of Ferara, without any reference to his own operation, and it is not even necessarily conclusive that he was established in Italy; for according to the prevailing usage of the mediæval craftsmen to improve their skill in foreign schools, his pupils, Andrea and Giovani, might have resorted to Spain, to perfect their apprenticeship under a celebrated master.

But that Ferara was a native of Italy is confirmed by the evidence that before and during his time there were others of the same surname, swordmakers in that country. This is sufficiently indicated by the mode of his denomination—"de i Ferari," of the "Feraras," which expresses

that a family of this appellation was then established, and familiarly known, if not celebrated, in the peninsula ; and that they were of native extraction is confirmed by the before-mentioned restriction of their recorder to the artists of his own country. From whence it may be concluded that the origin of the Ferari was in the ducal city of the same name. These assumptions are confirmed by the existence of blades bearing the name of Cosmo, and of Piero Ferara, the last of a form coëval with those of Andrea, the first of a period about two generations anterior. The time and country of both these makers are indicated by circumstantial associations ; of Piero the nationality is presumptive in the name, which for a Spaniard had been "Pedro," while his era is evinced by the form of his blades corresponding in model with those of Andrea. In the instance of Cosmo, the nationality is no less expressed by an appellation almost exclusively Italian, and the period by the form of weapons, identified with the first half of the sixteenth century. This datum is confirmed by a splendid two-handed sword in our possession, bearing the distinctive features of that time, marked with the name Cosmo Ferara, accompanied by the tradition that it belonged originally to the celebrated Italian general, Prospero Colonna, who died in 1523.

From all these combinations there results a chain of circumstantial evidence, closely approaching to demonstration, that Andrea Ferara was born about the year 1553, that he was of a family of armourers which had existed in Italy at least two generations before that time, and of whom the first, like Giovani de Bologna, Leonardo da Vinci, Paolo Veronese, and a crowd of mediaeval artists, derived his nomination from the place of his nativity—the ducal city of Ferara.

Of Giovan Donato we know nothing beyond the notice of Cigogna ; but since he is called the brother of Andrea, it is uncertain whether he was the son of the same mother and of another father, or whether the name of Donato was only a second baptismal appellation. This supposition is rendered probable from the general mediaeval usage of Italy, in the popular nomination of artists by their Christian names alone, as Guido, Raphael, Claude, Salvator, Michel-Angelo, &c., an inference which is confirmed by the apparent similar example in the designation of the brother armourers, Simone and Serafino, "figlioli del famoso Serafino," in which it is evident that not only the name of Simone, but that of the Serafini, father and son, was a baptismal and not a surname, for, if otherwise, the elder Serafino should have been distinguished by his prænomen. From all these considerations, therefore, it is probably conclusive that the entire name of Giovani was "Giovan Donato Ferara," and that he was full brother to Andrea.

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THE TEMPTING MOMENT.

Iymdale.

BOOK THE THIRD.

CHAPTER XIII.

EXIT.



T rained all through the night; and when the morning came, it was raining still.

Contrary to his ordinary habit, Midwinter was waiting in the breakfast-room when Allan entered it. He looked worn and weary, but his smile was gentler, and his manner more composed than usual. To Allan's surprise he approached the subject of the previous night's conversation of his own accord as soon as the servant was out of the room.

"I am afraid you thought me very impatient and very abrupt with you last night," he said. "I will try to make amends for it this morning. I will hear

everything you wish to say to me on the subject of Miss Gwilt."

"I hardly like to worry you," said Allan. "You look as if you had had a bad night's rest."

"I have not slept well for some time past," replied Midwinter quietly. "Something has been wrong with me. But I believe I have found out the way to put myself right again without troubling the doctors. Later in the morning I shall have something to say to you about this. Let us get back first to what you were talking of last night. You were speaking of some difficulty——" He hesitated, and finished the sentence in a tone so low that Allan failed to hear him. "Perhaps it would be better," he went on, "if, instead of speaking to me, you spoke to Mr. Brock?"

"I would rather speak to *you*," said Allan. "But tell me first, was I right or wrong last night in thinking you disapproved of my falling in love with Miss Gwilt?"

Midwinter's lean nervous fingers began to crumble the bread in his plate. His eyes looked away from Allan for the first time.

"If you have any objection," persisted Allan, "I should like to hear it."

Midwinter suddenly looked up again, his cheeks turning ashy pale, and his glittering black eyes fixed full on Allan's face.

"You love her," he said. "Does *she* love *you*?"

"You won't think me vain?" returned Allan. "I told you yesterday I had had private opportunities with her——"

Midwinter's eyes dropped again to the crumbs on his plate. "I understand," he interposed quickly. "You were wrong last night. I had no objections to make."

"Don't you congratulate me?" asked Allan, a little uneasily. "Such a beautiful woman! such a clever woman!"

Midwinter held out his hand. "I owe you more than mere congratulations," he said. "In anything which is for your happiness I owe you help." He took Allan's hand, and wrung it hard. "Can I help you?" he asked, growing paler and paler as he spoke.

"My dear fellow!" exclaimed Allan, "what is the matter with you? Your hand is as cold as ice."

Midwinter smiled faintly. "I am always in extremes," he said; "my hand was as hot as fire the first time you took it at the old West-country inn. Come to that difficulty which you have not come to yet. You are young, rich, your own master—and she loves you. What difficulty can there be?"

Allan hesitated. "I hardly know how to put it," he replied. "As you said just now, I love her, and she loves me—and yet there is a sort of strangeness between us. One talks a good deal about one's self, when one is in love—at least, I do. I've told her all about myself, and my mother, and how I came in for this place, and the rest of it. Well—though it doesn't strike me when we are together—it comes across me now and then, when I'm away from her, that she doesn't say much on her side. In fact, I know no more about her than you do."

"Do you mean that you know nothing about Miss Gwilt's family and friends?"

"That's it, exactly."

"Have you never asked her about them?"

"I said something of the sort the other day," returned Allan; "and I'm afraid, as usual, I said it in the wrong way. She looked—I can't quite tell you how; not exactly displeased, but—oh, what things words are! I'd give the world, Midwinter, if I could only find the right word when I want it, as well as you do."

"Did Miss Gwilt say anything to you in the way of a reply?"

"That's just what I was coming to. She said, 'I shall have a melancholy story to tell you one of these days, Mr. Armadale, about myself and my family; but you look so happy, and the circumstances

are so distressing, that I have hardly the heart to speak of it now.' Ah, she can express herself—with the tears in her eyes, my dear fellow, with the tears in her eyes! Of course I changed the subject directly. And now the difficulty is how to get back to it, delicately, without making her cry again. We *must* get back to it, you know. Not on my account; I am quite content to marry her first and hear of her family misfortunes, poor thing, afterwards. But I know Mr. Brock. If I can't satisfy him about her family when I write to tell him of this (which of course I must do), he will be dead against the whole thing. I'm my own master of course, and I can do as I like about it. But dear old Brock was such a good friend to my poor mother, and he has been such a good friend to me—you see what I mean, don't you?"

"Certainly, Allan; Mr. Brock has been your second father. Any disagreement between you about such a serious matter as this, would be the saddest thing that could happen. You ought to satisfy him that Miss Gwilt is (what I am sure Miss Gwilt will prove to be) worthy, in every way worthy—" His voice sank in spite of him, and he left the sentence unfinished.

"Just my feeling in the matter!" Allan struck in glibly. "Now we can come to what I particularly wanted to consult you about. If this was your case, Midwinter, you would be able to say the right words to her—you would put it delicately, even though you were putting it quite in the dark. I can't do that. I'm a blundering sort of fellow; and I'm horribly afraid, if I can't get some hint at the truth to help me at starting, of saying something to distress her. Family misfortunes are such tender subjects to touch on—especially with such a refined woman, such a tender-hearted woman, as Miss Gwilt. There may have been some dreadful death in the family—some relation who has disgraced himself—some infernal cruelty which has forced the poor thing out on the world as a governess. Well, turning it over in my mind, it struck me that the major might be able to put me on the right tack. It is quite possible that he might have been informed of Miss Gwilt's family circumstances before he engaged her—isn't it?"

"It is possible, Allan, certainly."

"Just my feeling again! My notion is, to speak to the major. If I could only get the story from him first, I should know so much better how to speak to Miss Gwilt about it afterwards. You advise me to try the major, don't you?"

There was a pause before Midwinter replied. When he did answer it was a little reluctantly.

"I hardly know how to advise you, Allan," he said. "This is a very delicate matter."

"I believe you would try the major, if you were in my place," returned Allan, reverting to his inveterately personal way of putting the question.

"Perhaps I might," said Midwinter, more and more unwillingly.

"But if I did speak to the major, I should be very careful, in your place, not to put myself in a false position—I should be very careful to let no one suspect me of the meanness of prying into a woman's secrets behind her back."

Allan's face flushed. "Good heavens, Midwinter," he exclaimed, "who could suspect me of that?"

"Noboddy, Allan, who really knows you."

"The major knows me. The major is the last man in the world to misunderstand me. All I want him to do, is to help me (if he can) to speak about a delicate subject to Miss Gwilt, without hurting her feelings. Can anything be simpler between two gentlemen?"

Instead of replying, Midwinter, still speaking as constrainedly as ever, asked a question on his side. "Do you mean to tell Major Milroy," he said, "what your intentions really are towards Miss Gwilt?"

Allan's manner altered. He hesitated and looked confused.

"I have been thinking of that," he replied; "and I mean to feel my way first, and then tell him or not afterwards, as matters turn out."

A proceeding so cautious as this, was too strikingly inconsistent with Allan's character not to surprise any one who knew him. Midwinter showed his surprise plainly.

"You forget that foolish flirtation of mine with Miss Milroy," Allan went on, more and more confusedly. "The major may have noticed it, and may have thought I meant—well, what I didn't mean. It might be rather awkward, mightn't it, to propose to his face for his governess instead of his daughter?"

He waited for a word of answer, but none came. Midwinter opened his lips to speak, and suddenly checked himself. Allan, uneasy at his silence, doubly uneasy under certain recollections of the major's daughter which the conversation had called up, rose from the table, and shortened the interview a little impatiently.

"Come! come!" he said, "don't sit there looking unutterable things—don't make mountains out of molehills. You have such an old, old head, Midwinter, on those young shoulders of yours? Let's have done with all these pros and cons. Do you mean to tell me in plain words, that it won't do to speak to the major?"

"I can't take the responsibility, Allan, of telling you that. To be plainer still, I can't feel confident of the soundness of any advice I may give you, in—in our present position towards each other. All I am sure of is, that I cannot possibly be wrong in entreating you to do two things."

"What are they?"

"If you speak to Major Milroy, pray remember the caution I have given you! Pray think of what you say, before you say it!"

"I'll think—never fear! What next?"

"Before you take any serious step in this matter, write and tell Mr. Brock. Will you promise me to do that?"

"With all my heart. Anything more?"

"Nothing more. I have said my last words."

Allan led the way to the door. "Come into my room," he said, "and I'll give you a cigar. The servants will be in here directly, to clear away; and I want to go on talking about Miss Gwilt."

"Don't wait for me," said Midwinter; "I'll follow you in a minute or two."

He remained seated until Allan had closed the door—then rose, and took from a corner of the room, where it lay hidden behind one of the curtains, a knapsack ready packed for travelling. As he stood at the window thinking, with the knapsack in his hand, a strangely old, care-worn look stole over his face: he seemed to lose the last of his youth in an instant.

What the woman's quicker insight had discovered days since, the man's slower perception had only realized in the past night. The pang that had wrung him when he heard Allan's avowal, had set the truth self-revealed before Midwinter for the first time. He had been conscious of looking at Miss Gwilt with new eyes and a new mind, on the next occasion when they met after the memorable interview in Major Milroy's garden; he had been conscious of his growing interest thenceforth in her society, and his growing admiration of her beauty—but he had never until now known the passion that she had roused in him for what it really was. Knowing it at last, feeling it consciously in full possession of him, he had the courage which no man with a happier experience of life would have possessed—the courage to recall what Allan had said to him, and to look resolutely at the future through his own grateful remembrances of the past.

Steadfastly, through the sleepless hours of the night, he had contemplated the sacrifice of himself to the dearest interest of his friend, as part of the great debt of gratitude that he owed to Allan. Steadfastly he had bent his mind to the conviction that he must conquer the passion which had taken possession of him, for Allan's sake; and that the one way to conquer it was—to go. No after-doubt as to the sacrifice had troubled him when morning came; and no after-doubt troubled him now. The one question that kept him hesitating was the question of leaving Thorpe-Ambrose. Though Mr. Brock's letter relieved him from all necessity of keeping watch in Norfolk for a woman who was known to be in Somersetshire; though the duties of the steward's office were duties which might be safely left in Mr. Bashwood's tried and trustworthy hands—still, admitting these considerations, his mind was not easy at the thought of leaving Allan, at a time when a crisis was approaching in Allan's life.

He slung the knapsack loosely over his shoulder, and put the question to his conscience for the last time. "Can you trust yourself to see her, day by day, as you must see her—can you trust yourself to hear him talk of her, hour by hour, as you must hear him—if you stay in this

house?" Again the answer came, as it had come all through the night. Again his heart warned him, in the very interests of the friendship that he held sacred, to go while the time was his own; to go before the woman who had possessed herself of his love had possessed herself of his power of self-sacrifice and his sense of gratitude as well.

He looked round the room mechanically, before he turned to leave it. Every remembrance of the conversation that had just taken place between Allan and himself pointed to the same conclusion, and warned him, as his own conscience had warned him, to go. Had he honestly mentioned any one of the objections which he, or any man, must have seen to Allan's attachment? Had he—as his knowledge of his friend's facile character bound him to do—warned Allan to distrust his own hasty impulses, and to test himself by time and absence, before he made sure that the happiness of his whole life was bound up in Miss Gwilt? No. The bare doubt whether, in speaking of these things, he could feel that he was speaking disinterestedly, had closed his lips, and would close his lips for the future, till the time for speaking had gone by. Was the right man to restrain Allan, the man who would have given the world, if he had it, to stand in Allan's place? There was but one plain course of action that an honest man and a grateful man could follow in the position in which he stood. Far removed from all chance of seeing her, and from all chance of hearing of her—alone with his own faithful recollection of what he owed to his friend—he might hope to fight it down, as he had fought down the tears in his childhood, under his gipsy master's stick; as he had fought down the misery of his lonely youth-time in the country bookseller's shop. "I must go," he said, as he turned wearily from the window, "before she comes to the house again. I must go before another hour is over my head."

With that resolution he left the room; and, in leaving it, took the irrevocable step from Present to Future.

The rain was still falling. The sullen sky, all round the horizon, still lowered watery and dark, when Midwinter, equipped for travelling, appeared in Allan's room.

"Good heavens!" cried Allan, pointing to the knapsack, "what does *that* mean?"

"Nothing very extraordinary," said Midwinter. "It only means—good-by."

"Good-by!" repeated Allan, starting to his feet in astonishment.

Midwinter put him back gently into his chair, and drew a seat near to it for himself.

"When you noticed that I looked ill this morning," he said, "I told you that I had been thinking of a way to recover my health, and that I meant to speak to you about it later in the day. That later time has come. I have been out of sorts, as the phrase is, for some time past. You have remarked it yourself, Allan, more than once; and, with your usual kind-

ness, you have allowed it to excuse many things in my conduct which would have been otherwise unpardonable, even in your friendly eyes."

"My dear fellow," interposed Allan, "you don't mean to say you are going out on a walking tour in this pouring rain!"

"Never mind the rain," rejoined Midwinter. "The rain and I are old friends. You know something, Allan, of the life I led before you met with me. From the time when I was a child, I have been used to hardship and exposure. Night and day, sometimes for months together, I never had my head under a roof. For years and years, the life of a wild animal—perhaps I ought to say, the life of a savage—was the life I led, while you were at home and happy. I have the leaven of the vagabond—the vagabond animal, or the vagabond man, I hardly know which—in me still. Does it distress you to hear me talk of myself in this way? I won't distress you. I will only say that the comfort and the luxury of our life here are, at times, I think, a little too much for a man to whom comforts and luxuries come as strange things. I want nothing to put me right again but more air and exercise; fewer good breakfasts and dinners, my dear friend, than I get here. Let me go back to some of the hardships which this comfortable house is expressly made to shut out. Let me meet the wind and weather as I used to meet them when I was a boy; let me feel weary again for a little while, without a carriage near to pick me up; and hungry when the night falls, with miles of walking between my supper and me. Give me a week or two away, Allan—up northward, on foot, to the Yorkshire moors—and I promise to return to Thorpe-Ambrose, better company for you and for your friends. I shall be back before you have time to miss me. Mr. Bashwood will take care of the business in the office; it is only for a fortnight, and it is for my own good—let me go!"

"I don't like it," said Allan. "I don't like your leaving me in this sudden manner. There's something so strange and dreary about it. Why not try riding, if you want more exercise; all the horses in the stables are at your disposal. At all events, you can't possibly go to-day. Look at the rain!"

Midwinter looked towards the window, and gently shook his head.

"I thought nothing of the rain," he said, "when I was a mere child, getting my living with the dancing dogs—why should I think anything of it now? *My* getting wet, and *your* getting wet, Allan, are two very different things. When I was a fisherman's boy in the Hebrides, I hadn't a dry thread on me for weeks together."

"But you're not in the Hebrides now," persisted Allan; "and I expect our friends from the cottage to-morrow evening. You can't start till after to-morrow. Miss Gwilt is going to give us some more music, and you know you like Miss Gwilt's playing."

Midwinter turned aside to buckle the straps of his knapsack. "Give me another chance of hearing Miss Gwilt when I come back," he said, with his head down, and his fingers busy at the straps.

" You have one fault, my dear fellow, and it grows on you," remonstrated Allan; " when you have once taken a thing into your head, you're the most obstinate man alive. There's no persuading you to listen to reason. If you *will* go," added Allan, suddenly rising as Midwinter took up his hat and stick in silence, " I have half a mind to go with you, and try a little roughing it too ! "

" Go with *me* ! " repeated Midwinter, with a momentary bitterness in his tone, " and leave Miss Gwilt ! "

Allan sat down again, and admitted the force of the objection in significant silence. Without a word more on his side, Midwinter held out his hand to take leave. They were both deeply moved, and each was anxious to hide his agitation from the other. Allan took the last refuge which his friend's firmness left to him, he tried to lighten the farewell moment by a joke.

" I'll tell you what," he said, " I begin to doubt if you're quite cured yet of your belief in the Dream. I suspect you're running away from me, after all ! "

Midwinter looked at him, uncertain whether he was in jest or earnest. " What do you mean ? " he asked.

" What did you tell me," retorted Allan, " when you took me in here the other day, and made a clean breast of it ? What did you say about this room and the second vision of the dream ? By Jupiter ! " he exclaimed, starting to his feet once more, " now I look again, here *is* the Second Vision ! There's the rain pattering against the window—there's the lawn and the garden outside—here am I where I stood in the Dream—and there are you where the Shadow stood. The whole scene complete, out of doors and in ; and *I've* discovered it this time ! "

A moment's life stirred again in the dead remains of Midwinter's superstition. His colour changed ; and he eagerly, almost fiercely, disputed Allan's conclusion.

" No ! " he said, pointing to the little marble figure on the bracket, " the scene is *not* complete—you have forgotten something as usual. The Dream is wrong this time, thank God—utterly wrong ! In the vision you saw, the statue was lying in fragments on the floor ; and you were stooping over them with a troubled and an angry mind. There stands the statue safe and sound!—and you haven't the vestige of an angry feeling in your mind, have you ? " He seized Allan impulsively by the hand. At the same moment the consciousness came to him that he was speaking and acting as earnestly as if he still believed in the Dream. The colour rushed back over his face, and he turned away in confused silence.

" What did I tell you ? " said Allan, laughing a little uneasily. " That night on the Wreck is hanging on your mind as heavily as ever."

" Nothing hangs heavy on me," retorted Midwinter, with a sudden outburst of impatience, " but the knapsack on my back, and the time I'm wasting here. I'll go out, and see if it's likely to clear up."

" You'll come back ? " interposed Allan.

Midwinter opened the French window, and stepped out into the garden.

"Yes," he said, answering with all his former gentleness of manner, "I'll come back in a fortnight. Good-by, Allan; and good luck with Miss Gwilt!"

He pushed the window to, and was away across the garden before his friend could open it again and follow him.

Allan rose, and took one step into the garden; then checked himself at the window, and returned to his chair. He knew Midwinter well enough to feel the total uselessness of attempting to follow him, or to call him back. He was gone, and for two weeks to come there was no hope of seeing him again. An hour or more passed, the rain still fell, and the sky still threatened. A heavier and heavier sense of loneliness and despondency—the sense of all others which his previous life had least fitted him to understand and endure—possessed itself of Allan's mind. In sheer horror of his own uninhabitably solitary house, he rang for his hat and umbrella, and resolved to take refuge in the major's cottage.

"I might have gone a little way with him," thought Allan, his mind still running on Midwinter as he put on his hat. "I should like to have seen the dear old fellow fairly started on his journey."

He took his umbrella. If he had noticed the face of the servant who gave it to him, he might possibly have asked some questions, and might have heard some news to interest him in his present frame of mind. As it was, he went out without looking at the man, and without suspecting that his servants knew more of Midwinter's last moments at Thorpe-Ambrose than he knew himself. Not ten minutes since, the grocer and the butcher had called in to receive payment of their bills—and the grocer and the butcher had seen how Midwinter started on his journey.

The grocer had met him first, not far from the house, stopping on his way, in the pouring rain, to speak to a little ragged imp of a boy, the pest of the neighbourhood. The boy's customary impudence had broken out even more unrestrainedly than usual at the sight of the gentleman's knapsack. And what had the gentleman done in return? He had stopped and looked distressed, and had put his two hands gently on the boy's shoulders. The grocer's own eyes had seen that; and the grocer's own ears had heard him say, "Poor little chap! I know how the wind gnaws and the rain wets through a ragged jacket, better than most people who have got a good coat on their backs." And with those words he had put his hand in his pocket, and had rewarded the boy's impudence with a present of a shilling. "Wrong hereabouts," said the grocer, touching his forehead. "That's my opinion of Mr. Armadale's friend!"

The butcher had seen him farther on in the journey, at the other end of the town. He had stopped—again in the pouring rain—and this time to look at nothing more remarkable than a half-starved cur, shivering on a doorstep. "I had my eye on him," said the butcher; "and what do you think he did? He crossed the road over to my shop, and bought a bit of meat fit for a Christian. Very well. He says good-morning, and

crosses back again ; and, on the word of a man, down he goes on his knees on the wet doorstep, and out he takes his knife, and cuts up the meat, and gives it to the dog. Meat, I tell you again, fit for a Christian ! I'm not a hard man, ma'am," concluded the butcher, addressing the cook, " but meat's meat ; and it will serve your master's friend right if he lives to want it."

With those old unforgotten sympathies of the old unforgotten time to keep him company on his lonely road, he had left the town behind him, and had been lost to view in the misty rain. The grocer and the butcher had seen the last of him, and had judged a great nature, as all great natures *are* judged from the grocer and the butcher point of view.

THE END OF THE THIRD BOOK.

BOOK THE FOURTH.

CHAPTER I.

MRS. MILROY.

Two days after Midwinter's departure from Thorpe-Ambrose, Mrs. Milroy, having completed her morning toilette, and having dismissed her nurse, rang the bell again five minutes afterwards, and on the woman's reappearance, asked impatiently, if the post had come in.

" Post ? " echoed the nurse. " Haven't you got your watch ? Don't you know that it's a good half-hour too soon to ask for your letters ? " She spoke with the confident insolence of a servant long accustomed to presume on her mistress's weakness, and her mistress's necessities. Milroy, on her side, appeared to be well used to her nurse's manner ; she gave her orders composedly, without noticing it.

" When the postman does come," she said, " see him yourself. I am expecting a letter which I ought to have had two days since. I don't understand it. I'm beginning to suspect the servants."

The nurse smiled contemptuously. " Who will you suspect next ? " she asked. " There ! don't put yourself out. I'll answer the gate-bell this morning ; and we'll see if I can't bring you a letter when the postman comes." Saying those words, with the tone and manner of a woman who is quieting a fractious child, the nurse, without waiting to be dismissed, left the room.

Mrs. Milroy turned slowly and wearily on her bed, when she was left by herself again, and let the light from the window fall on her face.

It was the face of a woman who had once been handsome, and who was still, so far as years went, in the prime of her life. Long-continued

suffering of body, and long-continued irritation of mind, had worn her away—in the roughly-expressive popular phrase—to skin and bone. The utter wreck of her beauty was made a wreck horrible to behold, by her desperate efforts to conceal the sight of it from her own eyes, from the eyes of her husband and her child, from the eyes even of the doctor who attended her, and whose business it was to penetrate to the truth. Her head, from which the greater part of the hair had fallen off, would have been less shocking to see than the hideously youthful wig, by which she tried to hide the loss. No deterioration of her complexion, no wrinkling of her skin, could have been so dreadful to look at as the rouge that lay thick on her cheeks, and the white enamel plastered on her forehead. The delicate lace, and the bright trimming on her dressing-gown, the ribbons in her cap, and the rings on her bony fingers, all intended to draw the eye away from the change that had passed over her, directed the eye to it on the contrary; emphasized it; made it by sheer force of contrast more hopeless and more horrible than it really was. An illustrated book of the fashions, in which women were represented exhibiting their finery by means of the free use of their limbs, lay on the bed from which she had not moved for years, without being lifted by her nurse. A hand-glass was placed with the book so that she could reach it easily. She took up the glass after her attendant had left the room, and looked at her face with an unblushing interest and attention which she would have been ashamed of herself at the age of eighteen.

"Older and older, and thinner and thinner!" she said. "The major will soon be a free man—but I'll have that red-haired hussy out of the house first!"

She dropped the looking-glass on the counterpane, and clenched the hand that had held it. Her eyes suddenly riveted themselves on a little crayon portrait of her husband hanging on the opposite wall; they looked at the likeness with the hard and cruel brightness of the eyes of a bird of prey. "Red is your taste in your old age, is it?" she said to the portrait. "Red hair and a serofulous complexion and a padded figure, a ballet-girl's walk, and a pickpocket's light fingers. *Miss Gwilt!* *Miss*, with those eyes, and that walk!" She turned her head suddenly on the pillow, and burst into a harsh, jeering laugh. "*Miss!*" she repeated over and over again, with the venomously-pointed emphasis of the most merciless of all human forms of contempt—the contempt of one woman for another.

The age we live in is an age which finds no human creature inexcusable. Is there an excuse for Mrs. Milroy? Let the story of her life answer the question.

She had married the major at an unusually early age; and, in marrying him, had taken a man for her husband who was old enough to be her father—a man who, at that time, had the reputation, and not unjustly, of having made the freest use of his social gifts, and his advantages of personal appearance in the society of women. Indifferently educated, and

below her husband in station, she had begun by accepting his addresses under the influence of her own flattered vanity, and had ended by feeling the fascination which Major Milroy had exercised over women infinitely her mental superiors, in his earlier life. He had been touched, on his side, by her devotion, and had felt, in his turn, the attraction of her beauty, her freshness, and her youth. Up to the time when their little daughter and only child had reached the age of eight years, their married life had been an unusually happy one. At that period, the double misfortune fell on the household, of the failure of the wife's health, and the almost total loss of the husband's fortune ; and from that moment, the domestic happiness of the married pair was virtually at an end.

Having reached the age when men in general are readier, under the pressure of calamity, to resign themselves than to resist, the major had secured the little relics of his property, had retired into the country, and had patiently taken refuge in his mechanical pursuits. A woman nearer to him in age, or a woman with a better training and more patience of disposition than his wife possessed, would have understood the major's conduct, and have found consolation in the major's submission. Mrs. Milroy found consolation in nothing. Neither nature nor training helped her to meet resignedly the cruel calamity which had struck at her in the bloom of womanhood and the prime of beauty. The curse of incurable sickness blighted her at once and for life.

Suffering can, and does, develop the latent evil that there is in humanity, as well as the latent good. The good that was in Mrs. Milroy's nature shrank up under that subtly-deteriorating influence in which the evil grew and flourished. Month by month as she became the weaker woman physically, she became the worse woman morally. All that was mean, cruel, and false in her, expanded in steady proportion to the contraction of all that had once been generous, gentle, and true. Old suspicions of her husband's readiness to relapse into the irregularities of his bachelor life, which, in her healthier days of mind and body, she had openly confessed to him—which she had always sooner or later seen to be suspicious that he had not deserved—came back, now that sickness had divorced her from him, in the form of that baser conjugal distrust which keeps itself cunningly secret; which gathers together its inflammatory particles atom by atom into a heap, and sets the slowly-burning frenzy of jealousy alight in the mind. No proof of her husband's blameless and patient life that could now be shown to Mrs. Milroy; no appeal that could be made to her respect for herself, or for her child growing up to womanhood, availed to dissipate the terrible delusion born of her hopeless illness, and growing steadily with its growth. Like all other madness it had its ebb and flow, its time of spasmodic outburst, and its time of deceitful repose—but active or passive, it was always in her. It had injured innocent servants, and insulted blameless strangers. It had brought the first tears of shame and sorrow into her daughter's eyes, and had set the deepest lines that scored it in her husband's face. It had made the secret misery of the little

household for years—and it was now to pass beyond the family limits, and to influence coming events at Thorpe-Ambrose, in which the future interests of Allan and Allan's friend were vitally concerned.

A moment's glance at the posture of domestic affairs in the cottage, prior to the engagement of the new governess, is necessary to the due appreciation of the serious consequences that followed Miss Gwilt's appearance on the scene.

On the marriage of the governess who had lived in his service for many years (a woman of an age and an appearance to set even Mrs. Milroy's jealousy at defiance), the major had considered the question of sending his daughter away from home, far more seriously than his wife supposed. On the one hand, he was conscious that scenes took place in the house at which no young girl should be present. On the other, he felt an invincible reluctance to apply the one efficient remedy—the keeping his daughter away from home in school-time and holiday-time alike. The struggle thus raised in his mind once set at rest, by the resolution to advertise for a new governess, Major Milroy's natural tendency to avoid trouble rather than to meet it, had declared itself in its customary manner. He had closed his eyes again on his home anxieties as quietly as usual, and had gone back, as he had gone back on hundreds of previous occasions, to the consoling society of his old friend the clock.

It was far otherwise with the major's wife. The chance which her husband had entirely overlooked, that the new governess who was to come might be a younger and a more attractive woman than the old governess who had gone, was the first chance that presented itself as possible to Mrs. Milroy's mind. She had said nothing. Secretly waiting, and secretly nursing her inveterate distrust, she had encouraged her husband and her daughter to leave her on the occasion of the picnic, with the express purpose of making an opportunity for seeing the new governess alone. The governess had shown herself; and the smouldering fire of Mrs. Milroy's jealousy had burst into flame, in the moment when she and the handsome stranger first set eyes on each other.

The interview over, Mrs. Milroy's suspicions fastened at once and immovably on her husband's mother. She was well aware that there was no one else in London on whom the major could depend to make the necessary inquiries; she was well aware that Miss Gwilt had applied for the situation, in the first instance, as a stranger answering an advertisement published in a newspaper. Yet knowing this, she had obstinately closed her eyes, with the blind frenzy of the blindest of all the passions, to the facts straight before her; and, looking back to the last of many quarrels between them which had ended in separating the elder lady and herself, had seized on the conclusion that Miss Gwilt's engagement was due to her mother-in-law's vindictive enjoyment of making mischief in her household. The inference which the very servants themselves, witnesses of the family scandal, had correctly drawn—that the major's mother, in securing the services of a well-recommended governess for her son, had

thought it no part of her duty to consider that governess's looks in the purely fanciful interests of the major's wife—was an inference which it was simply impossible to convey into Mrs. Milroy's mind. The resolution which her jealousy of her husband would, in any case, have led her to take after seeing Miss Gwilt, was a resolution doubly confirmed by the conviction that now possessed her. Miss Gwilt had barely closed the sick-room door when the whispered words hissed out of Mrs. Milroy's lips, "Before another week is over your head, my lady, you go!"

From that moment, through the wakeful night and the weary day, the one object of the bedridden woman's life was to procure the new governess's dismissal from the house.

The assistance of the nurse, in the capacity of spy, was secured—as Mrs. Milroy had been accustomed to secure other extra services which her attendant was not bound to render her—by a present of a dress from the mistress's wardrobe. One after another, articles of wearing apparel which were now useless to Mrs. Milroy, had ministered in this way to feed the nurse's greed—the insatiable greed of an ugly woman for fine clothes. Bribed with the smartest dress she had secured yet, the household spy took her secret orders, and applied herself with a vile enjoyment of it to her secret work.

The days passed, the work went on—but nothing came of it. Mistress and servant had a woman to deal with who was a match for both of them. Repeated intrusions on the major, when the governess happened to be in the same room with him, failed to discover the slightest impropriety of word, look, or action, on either side. Stealthy watching and listening at the governess's bedroom door, detected that she kept a light in her room at late hours of the night, and that she groaned and ground her teeth in her sleep—and detected nothing more. Careful superintendence in the day-time, proved that she regularly posted her own letters, instead of giving them to the servant; and that on certain occasions when the occupation of her hours out of lesson-time and walking-time was left at her own disposal, she had been suddenly missed from the garden, and then caught coming back alone to it from the park. Once, and once only, the nurse had found an opportunity of following her out of the garden—had been detected immediately in the park—and had been asked with the most exasperating politeness, if she wished to join Miss Gwilt in a walk. Small circumstances of this kind, which were sufficiently suspicious to the mind of a jealous woman, were discovered in abundance. But circumstances, on which to found a valid ground of complaint that might be laid before the major, proved to be utterly wanting. Day followed day, and Miss Gwilt remained persistently correct in her conduct, and persistently irreproachable in her relations towards her employer and her pupil.

Foiled in this direction, Mrs. Milroy tried next to find an assailable place in the statement which the governess's reference had made on the subject of the governess's character.

Obtaining from the major the minutely careful report which his mother

had addressed to him on this topic, Mrs. Milroy read and re-read it, and failed to find the weak point of which she was in search in any part of the letter. All the customary questions on such occasions had been asked, and all had been scrupulously and plainly answered. The one sole opening for an attack which it was possible to discover, was an opening which showed itself, after more practical matters had been all disposed of, in the closing sentences of the letter.

"I was so struck" (the passage ran) "by the grace and distinction of Miss Gwilt's manners, that I took an opportunity, when she was out of the room, of asking how she first came to be a governess. 'In the usual way,' I was told. 'A sad family misfortune, in which she behaved nobly. She is a very sensitive person, and shrinks from speaking of it among strangers—a natural reluctance which I have always felt it a matter of delicacy to respect.' Hearing this, of course I felt the same delicacy on my side. It was no part of my duty to intrude on the poor thing's private sorrows; my only business was to do, what I have now done, to make sure that I was engaging a capable and respectable governess to instruct my grandchild."

After careful consideration of these lines, Mrs. Milroy having a strong desire to find the circumstances suspicious, found them suspicious accordingly. She determined to sift the mystery of Miss Gwilt's family misfortunes to the bottom, on the chance of extracting from it something useful to her purpose. There were two ways of doing this. She might begin by questioning the governess herself, or she might begin by questioning the governess's reference. Experience of Miss Gwilt's quickness of resource in dealing with awkward questions at their introductory interview, decided her on taking the latter course. "I'll get the particulars from the reference first," thought Mrs. Milroy, "and then question the creature herself, and see if the two stories agree."

The letter of inquiry was short and scrupulously to the point. Mrs. Milroy began by informing her correspondent that the state of her health necessitated leaving her daughter entirely under the governess's influence and control. On that account she was more anxious than most mothers to be thoroughly informed in every respect about the person to whom she confided the entire charge of an only child; and, feeling this anxiety, she might perhaps be excused for putting what might be thought, after the excellent character Miss Gwilt had received, a somewhat unnecessary question. With that preface, Mrs. Milroy came to the point, and requested to be informed of the circumstances which had obliged Miss Gwilt to go out as a governess.

The letter, expressed in these terms, was posted the same day. On the morning when the answer was due, no answer appeared. The next morning arrived, and still there was no reply. When the third morning came, Mrs. Milroy's impatience had broken loose from all restraint. She had rung for the nurse in the manner which has been already recorded, and had ordered the woman to be in waiting to receive the letters of the

morning with her own hands. In this position matters now stood ; and in these domestic circumstances the new series of events at Thorpe-Ambrose took their rise.

Mrs. Milroy had just looked at her watch, and had just put her hand once more to the bell-pull, when the door opened and the nurse entered the room.

"Has the postman come?" asked Mrs. Milroy.

The nurse laid a letter on the bed without answering, and waited, with unconcealed curiosity, to watch the effect which it produced on her mistress.

Mrs. Milroy tore open the envelope the instant it was in her hand. A printed paper appeared (which she threw aside), surrounding a letter (which she looked at) in her own handwriting! She snatched up the printed paper. It was the customary Post-Office circular, informing her that her letter had been duly presented at the right address, and that the person whom she had written to was not to be found.

"Something wrong?" asked the nurse, detecting a change in her mistress's face.

The question passed unheeded. Mrs. Milroy's writing-desk was on the table at the bedside. She took from it the letter which the major's mother had written to her son, and turned to the page containing the name and address of Miss Gwilt's reference. "Mrs. Mandeville, 18, Kingsdown Crescent, Bayswater," she read eagerly to herself, and then looked at the address on her own returned letter. No error had been committed: the directions were identically the same.

"Something wrong?" reiterated the nurse, advancing a step nearer to the bed.

"Thank God—yes!" cried Mrs. Milroy, with a sudden outburst of exultation. She tossed the Post-Office circular to the nurse, and beat her bony hands on the bed-clothes, in an ecstasy of anticipated triumph. "Miss Gwilt's an impostor! Miss Gwilt's an impostor! If I die for it, Rachel, I'll be carried to the window to see the police take her away!"

"It's one thing to say she's an impostor behind her back, and another thing to prove it to her face," remarked the nurse. She put her hand as she spoke into her apron pocket, and, with a significant look at her mistress, silently produced a second letter.

"For me?" asked Mrs. Milroy.

"No," said the nurse, "for Miss Gwilt."

The two women eyed each other, and understood each other without another word.

"Where is she?" said Mrs. Milroy.

The nurse pointed in the direction of the park. "Out again, for another walk before breakfast—by herself."

Mrs. Milroy beckoned to the nurse to stoop close over her. "Can you open it, Rachel?" she whispered.

Rachel nodded.

"Can you close it again, so that nobody would know?"

"Can you spare the scarf that matches your pearl-grey dress?" asked Rachel.

"Take it!" said Mrs. Milroy, impatiently.

The nurse opened the wardrobe in silence; took the scarf in silence; and left the room in silence. In less than five minutes she came back with the envelope of Miss Gwilt's letter open in her hand.

"Thank you, ma'am, for the scarf," said Rachel, putting the opened letter composedly on the counterpane of the bed.

Mrs. Milroy looked at the envelope. It had been closed as usual by means of adhesive gum, which had been made to give way by the application of steam. As Mrs. Milroy took out the letter, her hand trembled violently, and the white enamel parted into cracks over the wrinkles on her forehead. "My drops," she said. "I'm dreadfully excited, Rachel. My drops!"

Rachel produced the drops, and then went to the window to keep watch on the park. "Don't hurry," she said. "No signs of her yet."

Mrs. Milroy still paused, keeping the all-important morsel of paper folded in her hand. She could have taken Miss Gwilt's life—but she hesitated at reading Miss Gwilt's letter.

"Are you troubled with scruples?" asked the nurse, with a sneer. "Consider it a duty you owe to your daughter."

"You wretch!" said Mrs. Milroy. With that expression of opinion, she opened the letter.

It was evidently written in great haste—was undated—and was signed in initials only. Thus it ran:—

"Diana Street.

"MY DEAR LYDIA,—The cab is waiting at the door, and I have only a moment to tell you that I am obliged to leave London, on business, for three or four days, or a week at longest. My letters will be forwarded if you write. I got yours yesterday, and I agree with you that it is very important to put him off the awkward subject of yourself and your family as long as you safely can. The better you know him, the better you will be able to make up the sort of story that will do. Once told, you will have to stick to it—and, *having* to stick to it, beware of making it complicated, and beware of making it in a hurry. I will write again about this, and give you my own ideas. In the meantime, don't risk meeting him too often in the park.—Yours, M. O."

"Well?" asked the nurse, returning to the bedside. "Have you done with it?"

"Meeting him in the park?" repeated Mrs. Milroy, with her eyes still fastened on the letter. "*Him!* Rachel, where is the major?"

"In his own room."

"I don't believe it!"

"Have your own way. I want the letter and the envelope."

"Can you close it again so that she won't know?"

"What I can open I can shut. Anything more?"

"Nothing more."

Mrs. Milroy was left alone again, to review her plan of attack by the new light that had now been thrown on Miss Gwilt.

The information that had been gained, by opening the governess's letter, pointed plainly to the conclusion that an adventuress had stolen her way into the house by means of a false reference. But having been obtained by an act of treachery which it was impossible to acknowledge, it was not information that could be used either for warning the major or for exposing Miss Gwilt. The one available weapon in Mrs. Milroy's hands was the weapon furnished by her own returned letter—and the one question to decide was how to make the best and speediest use of it.

The longer she turned the matter over in her mind, the more hasty and premature seemed the exultation which she had felt at the first sight of the Post-Office circular. That a lady acting as reference to a governess should have quitted her residence without leaving any trace behind her, and without even mentioning an address to which her letters could be forwarded, was a circumstance in itself sufficiently suspicious to be mentioned to the major. But Mrs. Milroy, however perverted her estimate of her husband might be in some respects, knew enough of his character to be assured that, if she told him what had happened, he would frankly appeal to the governess herself for an explanation. Miss Gwilt's quickness and cunning would, in that case, produce some plausible answer on the spot, which the major's partiality would be only too ready to accept; and she would at the same time, no doubt, place matters in train, by means of the post, for the due arrival of all needful confirmation on the part of her accomplice in London. To keep strict silence for the present, and to institute (without the governess's knowledge) such inquiries as might be necessary to the discovery of undeniable evidence, was plainly the only safe course to take with such a man as the major, and with such a woman as Miss Gwilt. Helpless herself, to whom could Mrs. Milroy commit the difficult and dangerous task of investigation? The nurse, even if she was to be trusted, could not be spared at a day's notice, and could not be sent away without the risk of exciting remark. Was there any other competent and reliable person to employ, either at Thorpe-Ambrose or in London? Mrs. Milroy turned from side to side of the bed, searching every corner of her mind for the needful discovery, and searching in vain. "Oh, if I could only lay my hand on some man I could trust!" she thought, despairingly. "If I only knew where to look for somebody to help me!"

As the idea passed through her mind, the sound of her daughter's voice startled her from the other side of the door.

"May I come in?" asked Neelie.

"What do you want?" returned Mrs. Milroy, impatiently.

"I have brought up your breakfast, mamma."

"My breakfast?" repeated Mrs. Milroy, in surprise. "Why doesn't Rachel bring it up as usual?" She considered a moment, and then called out sharply, "Come in!"

CHAPTER II.

THE MAN IS FOUND.

NEELIE entered the room, carrying the tray with the tea, the dry toast, and the pat of butter which composed the invalid's invariable breakfast.

"What does this mean?" asked Mrs. Milroy, speaking and looking as she might have spoken and looked if the wrong servant had come into the room.

Neelie put the tray down on the bedside table. "I thought I should like to bring you up your breakfast, mamma, for once in a way," she replied, "and I asked Rachel to let me."

"Come here," said Mrs. Milroy, "and wish me good-morning."

Neelie obeyed. As she stooped to kiss her mother, Mrs. Milroy caught her by the arm, and turned her roughly to the light. There were plain signs of disturbance and distress in her daughter's face. A deadly thrill of terror ran through Mrs. Milroy on the instant. She suspected that the opening of the letter had been discovered by Miss Gwilt, and that the nurse was keeping out of the way in consequence.

"Let me go, mamma," said Neelie, shrinking under her mother's grasp. "You hurt me."

"Tell me why you have brought up my breakfast this morning," persisted Mrs. Milroy.

"I have told you, mamma."

"You have *not*! You have made an excuse—I see it in your face. Come! what is it?

Neelie's resolution gave way before her mother's. She looked aside uneasily at the things in the tray. "I have been vexed," she said with an effort; "and I didn't want to stop in the breakfast-room. I wanted to come up here, and speak to you."

"Vexed? Who has vexed you? What has happened? Has Miss Gwilt anything to do with it?"

Neelie looked round again at her mother in sudden curiosity and alarm. "Mamma!" she said, "you read my thoughts—I declare you frighten me. It *was* Miss Gwilt."

Before Mrs. Milroy could say a word more on her side, the door opened, and the nurse looked in.

"Have you got what you want?" she asked as composedly as usual. "Miss, there, insisted on taking your tray up this morning. Has she broken anything?"

"Go to the window—I want to speak to Rachel," said Mrs. Milroy.

As soon as her daughter's back was turned, she beckoned eagerly to the nurse. "Anything wrong?" she asked in a whisper. "Do you think she suspects us?"

The nurse turned away, with her hard sneering smile. "I told you it should be done," she said, "and it *has* been done. She hasn't the ghost of a suspicion. I waited in the room—and I saw her take up the letter, and open it."

Mrs. Milroy drew a deep breath of relief. "Thank you," she said, loud enough for her daughter to hear. "I want nothing more."

The nurse withdrew; and Neelie came back from the window. Mrs. Milroy took her by the hand, and looked at her more attentively and more kindly than usual. Her daughter interested her that morning—for her daughter had something to say on the subject of Miss Gwilt.

"I used to think you promised to be pretty, child," she said, cautiously resuming the interrupted conversation in the least direct way. "But you don't seem to be keeping your promise. You look out of health and out of spirits—what is the matter with you?"

If there had been any sympathy between mother and child, Neelie might have owned the truth. She might have said frankly, "I am looking ill, because my life is miserable to me. I am fond of Mr. Armadale, and Mr. Armadale was once fond of me. We had one little disagreement, only one, in which I was to blame. I wanted to tell him so at the time, and I have wanted to tell him so ever since—and Miss Gwilt stands between us and prevents me. She has made us like strangers; she has altered him, and taken him away from me. He doesn't look at me as he did; he doesn't speak to me as he did; he is never alone with me as he used to be; I can't say the words to him that I long to say; and I can't write to him, for it would look as if I wanted to get him back. It is all over between me and Mr. Armadale,—and it is that woman's fault. There is ill-blood between Miss Gwilt and me the whole day long; and say what I may, and do what I may, she always gets the better of me, and always puts me in the wrong. Everything I saw at Thorpe-Ambrose pleased me, everything I did at Thorpe-Ambrose made me happy, before she came. Nothing pleases me, and nothing makes me happy now!" If Neelie had ever been accustomed to ask her mother's advice and to trust herself to her mother's love, she might have said such words as these. As it was, the tears came into her eyes, and she hung her head in silence.

"Come!" said Mrs. Milroy, beginning to lose patience. "You have something to say to me about Miss Gwilt. What is it?"

Neelie forced back the tears, and made an effort to answer.

"She aggravates me beyond endurance, mamma; I can't bear her; I shall do something——" Neelie stopped, and stamped her foot angrily on the floor. "I shall throw something at her head, if we go on much longer like this! I should have thrown something this morning if I hadn't left the room. Oh, do speak to papa about it! do find out some reason for

sending her away! I'll go to school—I'll do anything in the world to get rid of Miss Gwilt!"

To get rid of Miss Gwilt! At those words—at that echo from her daughter's lips of the one dominant desire kept secret in her own heart—Mrs. Milroy slowly raised herself in the bed. What did it mean? Was the help she wanted coming from the very last of all quarters in which she could have thought of looking for it?

"Why do you want to get rid of Miss Gwilt," she asked. "What have you got to complain of?"

"Nothing!" said Neelie. "That's the aggravation of it. Miss Gwilt won't let me have anything to complain of. She is perfectly detestable; she is driving me mad; and she is the pink of propriety all the time. I daresay it's wrong, but, I don't care—I hate her!"

Mrs. Milroy's eyes questioned her daughter's face as they had never questioned it yet. There was something under the surface, evidently—something which it might be of vital importance to her own purpose to discover—which had not risen into view. She went on probing her way gently deeper and deeper into Neelie's mind, with a warmer and warmer interest in Neelie's secret.

"Pour me out a cup of tea," she said; "and don't excite yourself, my dear. Why do you speak to *me* about this? why don't you speak to your father?"

"I have tried to speak to papa," said Neelie. "But it is no use; he is too good to know what a wretch she is. She is always on her best behaviour with him; she is always contriving to be useful to him. I can't make him understand why I dislike Miss Gwilt—I can't make *you* understand—I only understand it myself." She tried to pour out the tea, and in trying upset the cup. "I'll go downstairs again!" exclaimed Neelie, with a burst of tears. "I'm not fit for anything—I can't even pour out a cup of tea!"

Mrs. Milroy seized her hand, and stopped her. Trifling as it was, Neelie's reference to the relations between the major and Miss Gwilt had roused her mother's ready jealousy. The restraints which Mrs. Milroy had laid on herself thus far, vanished in a moment—vanished, even in the presence of a girl of sixteen, and that girl her own child!

"Wait here!" she said, eagerly. "You have come to the right place and the right person. Go on abusing Miss Gwilt. I like to hear you—I hate her too!"

"You, mamma!" exclaimed Neelie, looking at her mother in astonishment.

For a moment, Mrs. Milroy hesitated before she said more. Some last-left instinct of her married life in its earlier and happier time, pleaded hard with her to respect the youth and the sex of her child. But jealousy respects nothing; in the heaven above and on the earth beneath, nothing but itself. The slow fire of self-torment burning night and day in the miserable woman's breast, flashed its deadly light into

her eyes, as the next words dropped slowly and venomously from her lips.

"If you had had eyes in your head you would never have gone to your father," she said. "Your father has reasons of his own for hearing nothing that you can say, or that anybody can say, against Miss Gwilt."

Many girls at Neelie's age would have failed to see the meaning hidden under those words. It was the daughter's misfortune, in this instance, to have had experience enough of the mother to understand her. Neelie started back from the bedside, with her face in a glow. "Mamma!" she said, "you are talking horribly! Papa is the best and dearest and kindest—oh, I won't hear it!—I won't hear it!"

Mrs. Milroy's fierce temper broke out in an instant—broke out all the more violently from her feeling herself, in spite of herself, to have been in the wrong.

"You impudent little fool!" she retorted furiously, "do you think I want *you* to remind me of what I owe to your father? Am I to learn how to speak of your father, and how to think of your father, and how to love and honour your father, from a forward little minx like you! I was finely disappointed, I can tell you, when you were born—I wished for a boy, you impudent hussy! If you ever find a man who is fool enough to marry you, he will be a lucky man if you only love him half as well, a quarter as well, a hundred-thousandth part as well, as I loved your father. Ah, you can cry when it's too late; you can come creeping back to beg your mother's pardon after you have insulted her. You little dowdy, half-grown creature! I was handsomer than ever you will be when I married your father—I would have gone through fire and water to serve your father! If he had asked me to cut off one of my arms, I would have done it—I would have done it to please him!" She turned suddenly with her face to the wall—forgetting her daughter, forgetting her husband, forgetting everything but the torturing remembrance of her lost beauty. "My arms!" she repeated to herself, faintly. "What arms I had when I was young!" She snatched up the sleeve of her dressing-gown furtively, with a shudder. "Oh, look at it now! look at it now!"

Neelie fell on her knees at the bedside, and hid her face. In sheer despair of finding comfort and help anywhere else, she had cast herself impulsively on her mother's mercy—and this was how it had ended! "Oh, mamma," she pleaded, "you know I didn't mean to offend you! I couldn't help it when you spoke so of my father. Oh, do, do, forgive me."

Mrs. Milroy turned again on her pillow, and looked at her daughter vacantly. "Forgive you?" she repeated, with her mind still in the past, groping its way back darkly to the present.

"I beg your pardon, mamma—I beg your pardon on my knees. I am so unhappy; I do so want a little kindness! Won't you forgive me?"

"Wait a little," rejoined Mrs. Milroy. "Ah," she said, after an interval, "now I know! Forgive you? Yes—I'll forgive you on one

condition." She lifted Neelie's head, and looked her searchingly in the face. "Tell me why you hate Miss Gwilt! You've a reason of your own for hating her, and you haven't confessed it yet."

Neelie's head dropped again. The burning colour that she was hiding by hiding her face, showed itself on her neck. Her mother saw it, and gave her time.

"Tell me," reiterated Mrs. Milroy, more gently, "why do you hate her?"

The answer came reluctantly, a word at a time, in fragments.

"Because she is trying—"

"Trying what?"

"Trying to make somebody who is much—"

"Much what?"

"Much too young for her—"

"Marry her?"

"Yes, mamma."

Breathlessly interested, Mrs. Milroy leaned forward, and twined her hand caressingly in her daughter's hair.

"Who is it, Neelie?" she asked, in a whisper.

"You will never say I told you, mamma?"

"Never! Who is it?"

"Mr. Armadale."

Mrs. Milroy leaned back on her pillow in dead silence. The plain betrayal of her daughter's first love, by her daughter's own lips, which would have absorbed the whole attention of other mothers, failed to occupy her for a moment. Her jealousy, distorting all things to fit its own conclusions, was busied in distorting what she had just heard. "A blind," she thought, "which has deceived my girl. It doesn't deceive me. Is Miss Gwilt likely to succeed?" she asked aloud. "Does Mr. Armadale show any sort of interest in her?"

Neelie looked up at her mother for the first time. The hardest part of the confession was over now—she had revealed the truth about Miss Gwilt, and she had openly mentioned Allan's name.

"He shows the most unaccountable interest," she said. "It's impossible to understand it. It's downright infatuation—I haven't patience to talk about it!"

"How do *you* come to be in Mr. Armadale's secrets?" inquired Mrs. Milroy. "Has he informed *you*, of all the people in the world, of his interest in Miss Gwilt?"

"Me!" exclaimed Neelie, indignantly. "It's quite bad enough that he should have told papa."

At the reappearance of the major in the narrative, Mrs. Milroy's interest in the conversation rose to its climax. She raised herself again from the pillow. "Get a chair," she said. "Sit down, child, and tell me all about it. Every word, mind—every word!"

"I can only tell you, mamma, what papa told me."

"When?"

"Saturday. I went in with papa's lunch to the workshop, and he said, 'I have just had a visit from Mr. Armadale; and I want to give you a caution, while I think of it.' I didn't say anything, mamma—I only waited. Papa went on, and told me that Mr. Armadale had been speaking to him on the subject of Miss Gwilt, and that he had been asking a question about her which nobody in his position had a right to ask. Papa said he had been obliged, good-humouredly, to warn Mr. Armadale to be a little more delicate, and a little more careful next time. I didn't feel much interested, mamma—it didn't matter to *me* what Mr. Armadale said or did. Why should I care about it?"

"Never mind yourself," interposed Mrs. Milroy, sharply. "Go on with what your father said. What was he doing when he was talking about Miss Gwilt? How did he look?"

"Much as usual, mamma. He was walking up and down the workshop; and I took his arm and walked up and down with him."

"I don't care what *you* were doing," said Mrs. Milroy, more and more irritably. "Did your father tell you what Mr. Armadale's question was—or did he not?"

"Yes, mamma. He said Mr. Armadale began by mentioning that he was very much interested in Miss Gwilt, and he then went on to ask whether papa could tell him anything about her family misfortunes ——"

"What!!!" cried Mrs. Milroy. The word burst from her almost in a scream, and the white enamel on her face cracked in all directions. "Mr. Armadale said *that*?" she went on, leaning out farther and farther over the side of the bed.

Neelie started up, and tried to put her mother back on the pillow.

"Mamma!" she exclaimed, "are you in pain? are you ill? You frighten me!"

"Nothing, nothing, nothing," said Mrs. Milroy. She was too violently agitated to make any other than the commonest excuse. "My nerves are bad this morning—don't notice it. I'll try the other side of the pillow. Go on! go on! I'm listening, though I'm not looking at you." She turned her face to the wall, and clenched her trembling hands convulsively beneath the bed-clothes. "I've got her!" she whispered to herself, under her breath. "I've got her at last!"

"I'm afraid I've been talking too much," said Neelie; "I'm afraid I've been stopping here too long. Shall I go downstairs, mamma, and come back later in the day?"

"Go on," repeated Mrs. Milroy, mechanically. "What did your father say next? Anything more about Mr. Armadale?"

"Nothing more, except how papa answered him," replied Neelie. "Papa repeated his own words when he told me about it. He said, 'In the absence of any confidence volunteered by the lady herself, Mr. Armadale, all I know or wish to know—and you must excuse me for saying, all any one else need know or wish to know—is, that Miss Gwilt

gave me a perfectly satisfactory reference before she entered my house.' Severe, mamma, wasn't it? I don't pity him in the least—he richly deserved it. The next thing was papa's caution to *me*. He told me to check Mr. Armadale's curiosity if he applied to me next. As if he was likely to apply to me! and as if I should listen to him if he did! That's all, mamma. You won't suppose, will you, that I have told you this because I want to hinder Mr. Armadale from marrying Miss Gwilt? Let him marry her if he pleases—I don't care!" said Neelie, in a voice that faltered a little, and with a face which was hardly composed enough to be in perfect harmony with a declaration of indifference. "All I want is to be relieved from the misery of having Miss Gwilt for my governess. I'd rather go to school. I should like to go to school. My mind's quite changed about all that—only I haven't the heart to tell papa. I don't know what's come to me—I don't seem to have heart enough for anything now—and when papa takes me on his knee in the evening, and says, 'Let's have a talk, Neelie,' he makes me cry. Would you mind breaking it to him, mamma, that I've changed my mind, and I want to go to school?" The tears rose thickly in her eyes, and she failed to see that her mother never even turned on the pillow to look round at her.

"Yes, yes," said Mrs. Milroy, vacantly. "You're a good girl; you shall go to school."

The cruel brevity of the reply, and the tone in which it was spoken, told Neelie plainly that her mother's attention had been wandering far away from her, and that it was useless and needless to prolong the interview. She turned aside quietly, without a word of remonstrance. It was nothing new, in her experience, to find herself shut out from her mother's sympathies. She looked at her eyes in the glass, and, pouring out some cold water, bathed her face. "Miss Gwilt shan't see I've been crying!" thought Neelie, as she went back to the bedside to take her leave. "I've tired you out, mamma," she said gently. "Let me go now; and let me come back a little later when you have had some rest."

"Yes," repeated her mother, as mechanically as ever; "a little later, when I have had some rest."

Neelie left the room. The minute after the door had closed on her, Mrs. Milroy rang the bell for her nurse. In the face of the narrative she had just heard, in the face of every reasonable estimate of probabilities, she held to her own jealous conclusions as firmly as ever. "Mr. Armadale may believe her, and my daughter may believe her," thought the furious woman. "But I know the major—and she can't deceive *me*!"

The nurse came in. "Prop me up," said Mrs. Milroy. "And give me my desk. I want to write."

"You're excited," replied the nurse. "You're not fit to write."

"Give me the desk," reiterated Mrs. Milroy.

"Anything more?" asked Rachel, repeating her invariable formula as she placed the desk on the bed.

"Yes. Come back in half-an-hour. I shall want you to take a letter to the great house."

The nurse's sardonic composure deserted her for once. "Mercy on us!" she exclaimed, with an accent of genuine surprise. "What next? You don't mean to say you're going to write — ?"

"I am going to write to Mr. Armadale," interposed Mrs. Milroy; "and you are going to take the letter to him, and wait for an answer—and, mind this, not a living soul but our two selves must know of it in the house."

"Why are you writing to Mr. Armadale?" asked Rachel. "And why is nobody to know of it but our two selves?"

"Wait," rejoined Mrs. Milroy; "and you will see."

The nurse's curiosity, being a woman's curiosity, declined to wait.

"I'll help you, with my eyes open," she said. "But I won't help you blindfold."

"Oh, if I only had the use of my limbs!" groaned Mrs. Milroy. "You wretch, if I could only do without you!"

"You have the use of your head," retorted the impenetrable nurse. "And you ought to know better than to trust me by halves, at this time of day."

It was brutally put; but it was true—doubly true, after the opening of Miss Gwilt's letter. Mrs. Milroy gave way.

"What do you want to know?" she asked. "Tell me—and leave me."

"I want to know what you are writing to Mr. Armadale about?"

"About Miss Gwilt."

"What has Mr. Armadale to do with you and Miss Gwilt?"

Mrs. Milroy held up the letter which had been returned to her by the authorities at the Post-Office.

"Stoop," she said. "Miss Gwilt may be listening at the door. I'll whisper."

The nurse stooped, with her eye on the door.

"You know that the postman went with this letter to Kingsdown Crescent?" said Mrs. Milroy. "And you know that he found Mrs. Mandeville gone away, nobody could tell where?"

"Well," whispered Rachel, "what next?"

"This, next. When Mr. Armadale gets the letter that I am going to write to him, he will follow the same road as the postman—and we'll see what happens when he knocks at Mrs. Mandeville's door."

"How do you get him to the door?"

"I tell him to go to Miss Gwilt's reference."

"Is he sweet on Miss Gwilt?"

"Yes."

"Ah!" said the nurse. "I see!"

To Homburg and Back for a Shilling.

THE map of Central Germany is as bewildering a puzzle as Bradshaw guide. A chart on any reasonable scale presents the appearance of being nearly all frontier with very little interior, like a farm all hedgerows. To the general run of tourists, it does not signify greatly whether their conveyance is passing through Baden or Nassau; whether they are eating their sandwich during the train's delay in Hesse-Darmstadt or Hesse Cassel; certain it is they will seldom know. The natives themselves have long since given up the attempt to distinguish localities.

The Irishman who discovered the sausage on his road to market, reconciled himself to eating it by declaring "it was all meat anyhow," and a bewildered traveller in the land of principalities and powers may console himself with something of the same sort—"It is all Germany anyhow." One day or night, however, good reader, when some half-hour of your life seems to have lost its value and its wings, open a map of Germany, and explore it until you discover a section of it bearing the name Hesse-Homburg: it is a Landgravate as I daresay you know, and its capital is Homburg!

There and back for a shilling, by the aerial machine plying between Cornhill and all parts of the globe is surely reasonable, and if this mode of conveyance precludes your taking a draught of the very nasty waters—which are certainly not those of Lethe, since once tasted, one never forgets—it spares you the risk of drawing a draft of another kind.

On the supposition, then, that you are seated in the cloud-cleaver, with your humble servant at the helm, farewell Cornhill, and presto! hail Hesse-Homburg!

Microscopic dominion with a huge plague in thee!—gnat's eye, with a prodigious beam in thee!—the sunshine seems to linger lovingly over thy hilly woodlands, and Nature to turn her sweet calm face upwards for the crimson-dyed sunset to tinge with its warm glow. Alas, perhaps it is to blush for the bad ends her beauty has been made to serve. The thrush throbs out its song, and the black-bird chatters out its startled notes; but human ears, when their owners bring them to Homburg, find more music in the rasping of the roulette-table, and the chink of gold, each coin of which is damp with the sweat of avarice's crooked fingers. Caustic to a festering sore, reprobation to a moral ulcer, and may success wait on the physician!

Shabby and uninteresting is the town of Homburg, with its plethora of hotels and Brummagem-jewellers' shops, to be compared not inaptly to a nut, of which the Casino is the kernel—the shell worthless, and the

fruit unwholesome. Anomalous in every condition of its existence, the Kursaal, or Casino, is not supported by the town, but supports it. The sovereign is not its patron, but its dependant. Poor old Landgrave ! the hundred thousand florins "la Direction" pays you, leaves you poor indeed, for it robs your poverty of its respectability.

If extremes meet anywhere, it is at such places as this that the point of contact may be looked for. Your tailor or your sovereign—it is a toss-up which you stumble upon while you take your morning ramble. Society sends samples of all her products to the exhibition temples of Mammon. The rustling silks of Kensington Gardens by day, and the rustling silks of the Haymarket by night, mingle their folds around the gaming-tables. A Montmorency handles the rake turnabout with a late hotel-waiter, who levanted with the money he is now losing at roulette.

Does the expression "lights and shades of life" mean anything that prose can handle? if so, it is at Homburg that they force themselves upon our notice, but so blended that the light partakes of shadow, and the shade of a sort of meretricious glitter, peculiar to that lofty spacious temple reared to Dives, which seems to echo every sound within its walls except a laugh, and its mirrors to reflect each thing and sign except a smile.

To abandon generalities, however, let us take our stand upon the stone terrace in the rear of the Homburg Casino, and observe.

What is going on in the green space below you? Foot-ball; and that accurately dressed dandy has inadroitly "slipped" the ball on to the parasols of that coterie of elderly ladies occupying the bench near the kiosk. How disgusted they look; and he, the sinner, how disconcerted! The ill-directed ball is lost among the mysteries of crinoline and muslin, and will not stir unless the ladies do, and they will not. Lavender kid gloves and patent leather boots for football! Serve you right, Sir Dandy! Ne bougez pas, mes dames!

And who have we here, with festooned skirt, displaying a hand-breadth of embroidered whiteness beneath, and a foot that scarce would crush a butterfly; and one, two—five little dogs—fluffiest of Maltese, and puggiest of pugs? That group of pretty children is more charmed with the small quadrupeds than their mistress with the toddling bipeds. Nay, madam, there was no need to call your curly favourite so crossly from the child's caress. A farthing for your heart! Fair are the features your lace fall shrouds, graceful and womanly your step and bearing. Pass on; that knot of mustachioed men yonder, under the trees, will pat your pets unchidden.

That smoke rising among the branches of the linden, curling away into space, is only tobacco-smoke apparently; but if our sight could separate the visible from the invisible, we should behold the sigh that escaped with that puff of smoke. Examine the smoker—a man of thought originally, if physiognomy be not an utter sham. His cold eye rests on the ball-players, but does not see them; his fingers tap the bench, in cadence to the music, but he does not hear it; he draws a ring from his

finger and examines it. Then he rises, and after walking once or twice to and fro before the bench with eyes fixed on the ground, quits the gardens briskly. If we follow we shall observe him disappear in a building immediately opposite the side entrance to the Casino, on the front of which is painted in large characters "Mont de Piété."

Why do not our pawnbrokers take a hint from their Continental co-fraternity? *They* make clean the outside of the platter at all events, by assuming a name suggestive of meekness and charity. The three balls have become odious: a picture of the Good Samaritan might be recommended in its stead. Our smoker wears gloves when he leaves the establishment, thinking every one would notice the absence of the diamond from his finger; his coat, too, is buttoned, lest spectators should observe where his watchguard is *not*, and guess where it *is*.

Now, the swinging portals of the Casino give him admittance, and in an hour, perhaps, he will resume his seat on the bench where we first saw him, listless and moody, with the dark ring darker round his eyes.

These desultory and unfilled-in outlines might be multiplied indefinitely from the twenty thousand strangers, or thereabout, that throng Homburg during the summer season, but they are figures in the background, and no more. Taste and ingenuity are abundantly evident in the arrangement of the spacious gardens and pleasure-grounds, wherein, if so disposed, you may find the "Drink-halle." Walks serpentine through fragrant hedges and avenues; green lawns inviting trespassing feet to a nearer inspection of flower-borders gorgeous with many-coloured blossoms; elegantly light pavilions draped with caressing creepers, form a scene fitly peopled by the well-dressed crowds who lounge away the mornings in its midst. Take one good look, then, at the landscape far and near, and own it beautiful; rich in the distant wooded slopes of variegated greens—in valleys wherein are hamlets half-hidden. It is the beauty of nature and innocence. Turn now and see the beauty of human art, and the allurements of what is exceedingly like vice. Are you wondering to see that company of men issue from the Casino, shooting-coated, gunned, and belted? Marvel no more; the sporting over woods and plains belongs to Monsieur Blanc and "la Direction." So you may weary out your legs in the green woods by day, killing hares and pheasants for the restaurant, if you will rest them at night beneath the green-clothed tables. Guns and dogs too are at the disposal of who will, and if the former burst occasionally, and the latter have but hazy notions of the distinction between rat and hare, or pheasant and hedge-sparrow, these details do not obtrude themselves in the paragraph dedicated to the sporting item of the director's programme.

Let us enter. The glass-doors by which we pass from the terrace admit to the concert-room. Cool is the marble-floor, pleasant the walls in tinted arabesque, on which fall bright rays of light through the cupola above. Would you rest? soft couches fill the niches in the walls. Would you read? pass through that door to the right, and you will find the press

of all the world ready to your hand. Look around you and admit that the stateliest of our Pall Mall club-houses scarcely equals this unrivalled "hell" in general plan or detail of decoration. There is no niggardly economy of space about those noble corridors whose massive columns, Cheysonaar's *chef d'œuvre*, may fairly claim to be the best bad thing of the century. Pace the front corridor, a promenade in itself—cool in summer, agreeably warm in winter—erring, if at all, in the too-fragrant exotics which avenue its lengths; and, when you have reached its left extremity, there are the willing doors which scarcely need a push to give you entrance to *the rooms*.

Many are the rooms in that gigantic swindle, but they have each a name, while these shrink from baptism: they are *the rooms*. Leave the doors closed, there are more outer courts of the temple to tread ere the iniquity of iniquities be entered. Retrace your steps to the other end of the corridor. If a cigar tempts you, ask a light of the smoker yonder in the white coat. A pleasant face under his white hat, eh? Fair, florid, blue-eyed, Saxon-looking. English, do you say? not a bit of it; German as the Drachenfels, and deeper than the Rhine at Bingen. Measure him from his well-made boots to his delicately-coloured neck-tie. Is there something of design in the widely thrown-back coat front? The waistcoat is spotlessly white, the watch-guard massive and the dangling pendants bulky. Is there purpose in the ungloved left hand? the diamond in the ring has certainly no flaw. His race has known how to distinguish pure stones and standard gold ever since it spoiled the Egyptians. He eyes you keenly—it is his business to scan faces and fathom pockets. But let us be just; the Homburg banker and money-lender loves gold without hating his fellow-creatures, and if he has many acceptances in his iron chest, he has a heart in his own. His mania is to collect autographs beneath "Orders to pay." Do you suppose he does not know that you had a chief interest in the two cargoes of cotton the lucky *Pursuivant* brought safely out of Wilmington last year? Pshaw, my dear sir, he has even calculated your profits, and is now calculating on your losses—at roulette. Well, if flies will dash into webs, spiders must eat them!

Here we are at the other end. Two hundred feet of tessellated marble pavement has brought us to the billiard-room. Where will you equal it? What could be more chastely correct than the tinting of ceiling and walls, or more original than the inlaying of the oaken flooring? The tables are models of carved work, the cues as bright as the marriage of rosewood and mother-of-pearl should be. Fingal might reflect himself in those mirrors from crown to toe without stooping, and on the velvet couches a Roberts might lounge and watch two ignorami knock the balls about, without losing his temper.

Hard by we have the restaurant, in every sense a banqueting-room. What of the Maison Dorée or the Café Riche after this Luellusian hall? Autumn's self might have snatched his grape-leaf coronal from his brow, and wreathed it round that pile of pictured fruit—so real, so ripe it

looks, so fresh and soft the vine that wantons round it. Those flowers planted on the ceiling by the clever brush, seem about to drop their petals in one's plate : "Cotelette aux feuilles de rose"—print it, Maître Chevet, in your "Speisekarten."

As a rule, the Germans do not know how or what to eat ; their diet is only fit for Germans ; but Chevet's art steers a nice mean between all the routes of cookery, and the god who made eating pleasant created Chevet as the equipoise to hunger. A sandwich, then, of brown bread and pâté de foie gras, diluted by a glass of Château d'Yquem, ere we pass to the right wing of the Casino. It is dedicated to the Muses—a theatre, limited in its dimensions, but nearly perfect in symmetry and arrangement. A good French company will enable you, on three days in each week, to persuade yourself that you are *not* at the Français, but the Variétés, or the Porte St. Martin.

So long as the multiplication of amusements can retain those who have the money to pay for them in Homburg, there is a chance of the fascination of play absorbing the hours of interval between pic-nics and concerts, balls and theatrical representations. The "Direction" base their proceedings upon this hypothesis ; the value of the shares proves how solidly.

Listen to the music. How it seems to filter through every obstruction ! If we go now to the concert-room we shall no longer find a vacant seat. We might, as we look into it, imagine the illustrated page of *Le Follet* had been suddenly vivified. Such natty little hats and loves of bonnets, adorned by faces pretty and expressive of "expressionlessness." Silks of peach-blossom hue that nothing more profane than the delicate glove that lifts it should touch. Butterflies of girls, half white, half rose or blue or green, sit in the sunny spots as butterflies should. Ah me ! Maidens, take away your innocence. And you, respectable father of a family, did you bring your four bright young daughters here because your Bädeker's guide told you that an evil thing flourished ? Will you take them to the London Casino, or the Argyll Rooms ? or is depravity become pure because it is in Germany ? How do you know, sir, who that well-dressed man is, that you allow him to hold your pretty inexperienced girl's skein of silk ? Very convenient to chat with somebody in English, and he seems a gentlemanlike person. Very good ! if you *will* try the experiment of making acquaintances in Homburg and such places, try it in your own person. You may come to regret that in your purse—a grief you may forget : Homburg has led to others you could *not*.

Now let the sweeping trains of silk and lace dust us a path—we will follow. Who could not fix the habitat of that bevy of showy dames ? the merest lounger at Tortoni's must get the type so stamped into his brain that nothing short of drowning could efface it. What is it that separates a Parisian woman from all other women ? giving Mademoiselle Flore of the Quartier Bréda something of Versailles, and Madame la

Duchesse de Pursang something of the Quartier Bréda. You guess where they are going by the direction they take.

But we must not talk now, or whisper at most. Here, the croupiers have tongues, the multitude ears only. Respect for the sanctity of gold ! the offerings of cupidity are piled on its altars, and from some hundreds of lungs the bated breath is rising—a fitting incense. How the feet sink into the pile of the rich carpet ! But before you quarrel with the profusion of embellishment about you, examine the care that has been lavished on its smallest detail. Every cupid in those frescoes is a study —every tint of cloud and sea an artistic contrast. The gilded frames are enormous, but the mirrors are gigantic : see how large a space their fields reflect. Let your eyes wander over the enamelled mouldings and along the wreaths of flowers, among which enough of gilt is dashed to make one think of sunshine in a garden. Behold those silken hangings coquettishly relieved by laced edges drooping in rich cords of many-coloured strands, and those crimson velvet couches sedately contrasting with buhl and ormolu. Verily, great is the mystery of upholstery !

We are in the principal saloon ; it is about one hundred feet by forty, and its two or three hundred occupants are divided into two groups, hiding the centres to which they gravitate. Approach and you will see in the midst of this first crowd a green-clothed board, not unlike a billiard-table without cushions, spaced by coloured lines—it is the Trente et Quarante table.

The individuals occupying raised seats on either side of the board, and supported right and left by another holding a short wooden rake, are the bankers and croupiers. In the centre of the table, equidistant from the respective trios, observe "the bank." The amount displayed in coin and notes rises perhaps to a hundred thousand francs ; allowing as much more to be apportioned to each of the other three tables, it gives a united capital of sixteen thousand pounds—a very tall candle too, to attract moths. The rouleaux of gold coin are neatly piled pyramidal as a centre, from which radiate star-like lines of five-franc pieces, thalers, and florins, ready to the "banker's" hand.

The bank divides the table into halves, each of which is a copy of the other. A square space defined by red lines in the middle, a triangle at the head where sits a single croupier, and on either border a diamond, the one red, the other green like the cloth. You notice coin in various sums lying irregularly within the sections of the table. That inside the square is staked on couleur, within the triangle on inverse ; that near the red diamond is on la rouge, all near the green diamond on le noir.

The croupier, with playing-cards in his hand, is calling the game ; it is very simple. He turns, face uppermost, from the pack, card after card, until the number of the pips has passed thirty (*trente*)—the cards having their numerical value from one to ten, and each picture-card counting as ten likewise. He then stops and declares the sum total of the first line of cards — it is the declaration for *le noir*. Recommencing,

he turns a second line of cards from the pack, until their value reaches or passes thirty, when he again stops and calls their sum total—it is the declaration for la rouge. The least in number wins.

Thus the numbers always range between thirty and forty, hence the name Trente et Quarante. If you had staked on the noir, and the cards first turned formed in the aggregate the number thirty-three, while those turned in the second instance rose to thirty-four, you would win, because the cards first turned always form the number for the noir, and thirty-three is less than thirty-four. Again, if the first card of the first series be red, a heart or diamond, and the last of the last series also red, couleur wins and inverse loses, because there is coincidence of colour; but if the first card be red and the last black, or *vice versa*, inverse wins and couleur loses, because there is divergence of colour. You are at liberty to stake upon any one or two of the four places—rouge, noir, couleur, inverse.

Should the cards when turned present in each series a corresponding number, what is called a *refait* takes place. When the first turned card of the corresponding series is red, *refait* signifies that the deal counts for nothing; but when the first card is black, *color nefastus*, your stake is put in prison on the line that bounds the place whereon you staked, and if that place wins, you recover possession of your stake, but nothing more. Thus in each such instance the bank plays for your money without the possibility of losing its own. The *refait* is then the odds in favour of the bank, and as it frequently occurs there is no need for the cheating such as is often groundlessly attributed to the establishment. To cheat outside of the rules would be to kill the goose outright. Watch the banker's face while he fulfils his office. Note how the one-expressioned eyes follow their changeless orbit, and the one-expressioned voice intones the weary monotone—the croupier's shibboleth. “*Faites vos jeux, messieurs—vos jeux sont faits ? rien ne va plus !*” The class is typified in him. Watchful, patient, civil, hard as the bright counters that habit has converted this money to, to them, they lead their life of dreariness, and pass away, nobody missing, nobody regretting them.

The players in the first rank occupy chairs; the outsiders stand. Where shall we select a subject for observation? There is one—the young man with a broad coarse face, eyes too close together, lips too wide apart, sensual and imbecile at once. Mind seems to have feared lest conduct like his should be attributed to her, and to have stamped the declaration of her absence on his face. The ancient patrimony squandered leaves him the ancient name to drag dishonoured through the court of bankruptcy. The next face tells a different tale—a good face learning bad expressions. The smooth brow wrinkling in a frown, the shapely mouth losing its lines of softness, and the pained eyes forgetful of their kindly look. A short week ago he played his maiden stake: it was as much a portion of his programme as to climb the Jungfrau, or see the Staltzenfels. He played to lose and won; since then he has played to

win and lost—and now he sits bewildered, fearing alike “to bear those ills he has, or fly to others that he knows not of.” Close by, is one who comes from Australia—a man of many speculations and fortunate in all. Countless herds peopled his vast “runs,” and multiplied like the patriarch’s in Padan-Aram. When sheep and oxen lost their worth as such, tallow took the form of wealth and slipped into his coffers. When earth gave forth her secret, and the startled colony went mad on gold, he dealt in that until his name became the synonym of luck. Now he sits the cool-headed speculator, shrewdly conscious that the present speculation is a sham, yet unconvinced that there is not in its constitution some flaw through which his coach-and-four of luck may be driven. Habit of rapid thought and practice of self-reliance are shown in his look and gestures, and the homely ill-cut clothes he wears are borne with the ease of one whom success has rendered independent of appearances.

Some cards whereon the game is pricked by pin-holes, and an open memorandum-book whose page shows columns of pencilled figures, lie before him, ramparted by piles of double Fredericks d’or. He seldom stakes, but, as each “coup” is called, perforates the card with his pin beneath the “R” for “rouge” or “N” for “noir,” according as each wins. Careful never to miss the call, he still finds time to watch the fluctuations of a neighbour’s fortune, or take a lesson in human nature from the countenances round him, in his quick, brief mode of gathering conclusions.

That old woman next to him has fixed his attention, as in querulous tones she addresses the grey-haired attendant at her side. False hair, false teeth, false bloom, false everything. Widow of a subtle statesman whom Europe honoured, she peers through her artificial curls at the gold she stakes upon the board that earns it her; for Countess —— holds it no disgrace to owe her revenues to shares in the Casino. Hear how she rates her poor old servant because the rouge whereon he staked by her direction, lost. Her shrivelled fingers, glittering with gems, strive to supply the place of failing sight by *feeling* for her gold. At times, they come in contact with another player’s stake, and, on learning her mistake, the courtliness of manner that neither age nor avarice can spoil, dignifies the prompt apology; followed, however, by as prompt abuse of her attendant. Forty years and more, she says, she has played where she sits, and she hopes to die there.

The Australian stakes at last. Six times noir has won in succession; the rakes have collected and distributed the coin from the last coup, then sounds the banker’s voice: “Faîtes vos jeux, messieurs!” The Australian, catching his eye, touches the red diamond with his pencil, and declares, “Cent Fredericks!” “Cent Fredericks à la rouge? C’est bien, monsieur;” then, after looking round the table, the banker adds, “Vos jeux sont faits, messieurs? rien ne va plus!” The cards fly from his rapid fingers, and the declaration of their value from his fluent tongue: “Neuf, seize, dix-neuf, vingt-sept, trente-cinq. Dix, vingt, vingt-trois,

vingt-neuf, trente-deux. Rouge gagne et couleur perd ! The croupier now thrusts with his rake a rouleau of fifty double Fredericks to the rouge, and as he withdraws his arm rakes in whatever stakes lie on couleur. Our Australian does not withdraw the rouleau ; he enters the usual memorandum in his book, perforates his card beneath the "R," and scarcely looking up, declares—"Deux cent Fredericks." "Deux cent Fredericks à la rouge," repeats the banker, imperturbably. Once more the game proceeds with the result—"Rouge gagne et couleur!" Two more rouleaux from the bank swell the Australian's stake. The countess in feeling about upsets one of the piles of gold in front of him. "O mon Dieu, monsieur, qu'est ce que je viens de faire? pardonnez-moi, je vous en prie. Mais, Antoine, vous êtes vraiment insupportable; vous n'êtes bon qu'à manger des pommes et à baigner mes chiens. Voilà encore une maladresse que vous me faites faire. Mille pardons, monsieur, je vous supplie ! "

Long before the old lady has finished speaking the Australian has re-made the pile of gold, and with a smile that partakes as much of pity as good-nature, is entering the game in his book. "Tout à la masse, monsieur?" inquires the banker, with his finger on the cards. Our player nods. "Quatre cent Fredericks à la rouge—rien ne va plus! Deux, huit, douze, vingt-deux, vingt-huit, trente-sept—" That looks like winning for the rouge. "Quatre, douze, dix-sept, dix-neuf, vingt-neuf, trente-huit—" No ! by the fickle goddess ! "Noir gagne et couleur!" The Australian does not even cast a look at the rouleaux as they are raked into the bank. Not so the player with the handsome face and troubled look ; his knees tremble convulsively beneath the table—he too had staked on la rouge. The first will return to his hotel and eat his filet de bœuf à la maître d'hôtel with appetite that no loss *he* will incur can impair ; the last will lie with the moonlight on his colder face in an avenue of the woods, where the Jäger will find him, pistol in hand. "La Direction" will bury him and pay his hotel bill if need be. They would even, had he asked it, have given him the means to go to the next duchy to destroy himself ; but as it has happened here it cannot be helped. "Faites vos jeux, messieurs !" The average of suicides enters into the statistics of the gambling establishments. Last year they were rather in excess of others, and rose, it is stated, to twenty-two cases.

Have you seen enough of the game ? Let us wander on. There is the English chaplain—unobtrusive and obliging to every one. His lines are cast in unpleasant places; frothy-mouthed bigots "spread phosphorus of zeal on scraps of fustian," and tease his life out. The school of men who vex "the House" with biennial motions to bring in bills to reform the Liturgy, would have him enter Mammon's temple as The Great Example did of old the Jewish one, to overturn the table of the money-changers, and withdraw their subscriptions from the church-fund because the pastor will not preach a gospel of damnation. Some good motive must exist for his presence in this unhallowed place. He cannot distinguish

who greets him, for his sight is very dim ; look at the ill-tied cravat and rebellious collar, and coat buttoned all awry ; his gloves, too, are not fellows —one is black, one green. He sees none of these shortcomings, and who knows him would have a waspish tongue indeed, to speak unkindly of them.

The Jews abound here. Splendid heads have some of them ; but some of them look very evil, too ; hungry, furtive, and unclean. A German Jew is the pariah of the race, and Homburg is his paradise. Here is one before us, sitting at the corner of this second table with several piles of silver coin and a few gold pieces before him. His face makes one think of Judas and the thirty drachmæ ; the woolly hair, grizzling at the temples, peaks down over the low forehead, a ridge of which sustains the straight black eyebrows ; the long, glittering tawny brown eyes seem to express a longing to break all the commandments at once ; his unwashed fingers wander from the double to the single florins as if the desire to gain two conflicted with the wish to risk but one. Let us be thankful that we owe *him* no pound of flesh.

The game, you see, is no longer Trente et Quarante ; there is more noise and bustle. This is the roulette table. The machine comprises a fixed sunken basin, channelled mid-way down with a groove in which the ball runs. The bottom of the basin is separate from the sides, and revolves at the motion imparted by the croupier when he turns the lever fixed in its centre. This portion of the machine is divided into thirty-seven small compartments, alternately red and black, and numbered from zero to thirty-six.

When the game begins, the croupier turns the lever smartly, and thus sends the ball spinning round in the groove in a direction opposite to that in which the numbers revolve. Presently the ball, losing the momentum required to keep it in the groove, drops to the lower part of the machine, which retains its rotatory motion for a longer period. Here it is hustled and jumped about against the divisions separating the figures, until, finally, it lights in the numbered space between some two of them, which decides the result of the coup. Observe that each half of the table presents, firstly, three columns of twelve figures each, coinciding with those in the basin, but inclosed in squares like those of a chess-board, and so arranged that the sequence runs horizontally across the three columns, not longitudinally down their length. The zero occupies a space by itself at the head of the column ; secondly, right and left of the numbers, a lined space divided into three sections ; those to the right presenting respectively a red diamond (*rouge*), then the word *pair*, further on the word *passe*, and, in the corresponding sections in the lined space on the opposite side of the table, a green diamond, *noir*, and the words *impair* and *manque* ; thirdly, at the end of the table farthest removed from the machine, another lined space a few inches in breadth, subdivided at its right and left extremities into three small squares.

Such is the roulette table. The choice of chances is varied. You can play on any one or any quantity of the numbers by placing a stake

on each of those you back, and if among your choice there should happen to be the corresponding number to that into which the ball falls, you become entitled to thirty-five times the amount of the stake upon it. Or you may play a single stake upon any two contiguous figures by placing it on the line separating the one from the other. In the event of either coming up you are entitled to sixteen times the amount of your stake. Or upon any four, by covering the point at which two lines cross in the body of the columns, by which means the coin touches the corners of four adjacent squares. Success entitles to eight times the stake. Or upon any sequence of three by placing a coin upon the boundary line in front of the sequence you select. Or sequence of six by allowing the coin to touch the boundary as well as the dividing line between two sequences. To make the meaning plainer : you see that the numbers 1, 2, 3, form the first series heading their respective columns divided by a horizontal line from 4, 5, 6, which follow in the second rank. To stake on the first sequence it would be necessary to place a coin so that one half of it lay inside the square occupied by the 1 or the 3, and the other half outside the line defining the space allotted to the numbers. To retain the sequence of six, while half the coin must still be outside the boundary line, the other must cover the point of contact of this last with the line separating 1, 2, 3, from 4, 5, 6. A successful coup on the sequence of three entitles to eight, on the sequence of six to five times the amount staked.

The three smaller squares at the end of the table are termed severally the places of "Le premier douze," "Le douze du milieu," and "Le douze dernier." By placing a stake in the first you back the twelve numbers from one to twelve inclusive, the second represents those from thirteen to twenty-four, the third, the remaining twelve numbers from twenty-five to thirty-six. Should any one of the numbers in the douze you play upon, win, you become entitled to twice the amount of your stake. You may, if you prefer it, back any one of the longitudinal columns of twelve figures—the result of success is the same.

The compartments in the machine being alternately red and black, explain the significancy of the red and green diamonds.

Pair (even) wins when the number declared is even.

Impair (odd) when the reverse is the case.

Passe (to pass) is successful when the declared number is included in the last half of the numbers, and has passed the middle number eighteen.

Manque (to miss) when it falls short of, or only attains to the middle number. Whenever zero is declared, the bank takes every stake on all the numbers except it; but those on the colours and on pair, impair, passe, and manque, are placed in prison, and played for in the same way as when a *refait* occurs at Trente et Quarante, and with results as little remunerative to the player.

Now, watch the game in operation ; it sounds a more complex affair than it is. Look at that tall man with the heavy bushy moustache, who has just tossed a gold piece on the numbers, seemingly indifferent as to

which it lights on. The croupier bows, and indicating 12 with the end of his rake, inquires by the gesture if that be where the money is to be staked. The player's countenance is not a common one, neither German, English, nor French in type—a bold manly face too—thought, obstinacy, and resolution about it. He does not look a communicative man, nor of those one would ask to pass the salt, or give a light for a cigar. There goes the machine. The keen eyes of banker and croupiers are on every square inch of the table to see that no stake is placed or altered when the ball falls. So! did you not hear it drop? “*Rien ne va plus. Trente-deux, rouge, pair, et passe!*” Such is the banker's declaration.

With a half smile the tall loser of the gold piece turns away, his eyebrows lifting slightly as he encounters the glance of two gentlemen, who standing behind him move aside to let him pass, and follow him at a short distance as he moves towards the doors. His gold piece is tossed in among the rest; to-morrow it will be no longer recognizable. The hand that staked it can do much, but cannot make the double Frederick worth more than twenty florins, although it belongs to Alexander, Emperor of All the Russias.

Is it Humboldt, in his *Cosmos*, who says that every separate atom possesses in itself all the natural properties and forces of this agglomeration of atoms on which man sells and buys, marries, and makes his last will and testament? Well, Homburg is no more than an atom. A particle cohering to the totality of the great human system by the central attraction of civilization, exactly as a grain of sand gravitates to the earth's centre. And just as mites betray their existence, with all its fit conditions, upon the grain of sand, so is human society in all its phases, and under all its aspects, visible on the larger atom—Homburg. The evil aspects predominate; but so they would everywhere, if mortal intelligence could take cognizance of the doings and seemings of the whole human family. Homburg is a microcosm; Gulliver could see a vast deal more in Lilliput than he could in Brobdingnag.

Turn your eyes upon that group of people pressed one against the other to watch those two Frenchmen who are playing in concert at the roulette table. By the way, one of the players is he who was condemned the other day *par contumace*, as the absolutist tribunals in France call it, to several years' penal servitude for the most flagitious cheating at the Paris clubs. Well, within that group are to be found representatives of most of the classes into which nature, employment, or necessity has forced the flood of humanity to diverge. Can you recognize any of the spectators? No. You see that little man, so short that even on tiptoe he can scarcely look over the shoulders of those in front—he with the green ribbon in his button-hole. A beholder cannot remember what his face is like, because it is so difficult to get beyond his eyes. What a glance there is in those deep dark optics: how unwinkingly they meet one—the windows of his brain whence his thought looks out: he is one of the great clocks of finance; when he strikes the money-mongers

set their watches by him. He is great on the Danube—vast at Vienna, and has solved the problem of extracting riches from poverty—*entendu*, that of the Austrian exchequer. The man whose broad shoulders intercept his view spends a fortune in advertising a quack medicine ; the advertisement sheet of every newspaper in Great Britain undergoes a course of his pills. Near him again, is an oddity ; the old, old man in the brown coat with a cape to it. He was at the duchess's ball at Brussels on that memorable summer night in —15. The British treasury has paid him half-pay for fifty years, which he has regularly lost at roulette ; he spends his life in compiling systems of play, in the belief that the bank is to be broken by arithmetic.

What a lovely face!—that girl's who has just handed a florin to the croupier to stake for her. Where are we to find the blue with which her eyes are painted ? So young, so beautiful, so innocent; for crime itself would be found not guilty if detected in such guise. Mercy upon us, what a sham the world is. She is Fräulein —, *la sylphide des sylphides* of the ballet at Berlin, and that gentleman who has just arrested her hand in the act of passing another stake to the croupier is the Herzog von —, her protector.

The embryo Redpaths and Robsons of society are there too, looking with sickening heart at the rake of the croupier, pitilessly overtaking the gold diverted from its legitimate destination, and feeling the damp shade of the prison creeping over the glittering saloons—the “coming event casting its shadow before.”

Certainly it was not philanthropy which built the Casino in Homburg. The town itself possesses neither attraction nor interest. The neighbourhood is charming, but far less so than the Valley of the Lahn, or the banks of the Neckar, and would not attract or retain the crowd of strangers that resorts to it but for the lure of the Casino. Of course it will be advanced by its defenders, that the benefit the town derives from the influx of visitors is at once the motive and justification of the establishment, and that the insignificancy of the town, apart from it, adds cogency to the justification. The objections that suggest themselves to this theory are, the manifest incongruity of subsidizing the sovereign of a state enormously for permission to improve his dominions ; the stringent municipal regulations, prohibiting all participation of the subjects of the Landgrave in the pursuits of the Casino, and the oft-recurring enactments by which the government finds it necessary to exercise pressure on the Direction, to wring from them their unwilling contributions towards the maintenance of the town.

Homburg proper benefits but in an infinitesimal degree from the toleration extended to legalized robbery. The hotel-keepers (and Homburg, like Ems in Nassau, and Interlaken in Switzerland, is little more than an assemblage of hotels,) are almost without exception strangers who transfer from the scene of their accumulation the fortunes made there. The “Direction” is foreign in all its elements, and if we except a few

Jew money-lenders (by courtesy bankers) who, for the most part, keep branches of other establishments—these are the only communities who profit by the existing state of things.

The outward and visible attractions of the Casino are so offered that any mere pleasure-seeker may readily be misled into the belief that Homburg is but a German Cheltenham improved upon by the liberality of its organizers. Gratuitous amusements in a sumptuous edifice create a feeling in favour of the promoters, which, in an uninitiated person, inspires something akin to gratitude. No sort of pressure is exercised to exact compensation from the amused by attendance at the gambling-tables. Curiosity and covetousness are the allies the Direction counts upon to serve their turn. The balls, sporting, concerts, theatre, races, &c. are the confection, les salons the grain of strychnine it overlays.

The imposture practised under the title Trente et Quarante and Roulette is so patent that the signalizing of a few facts will render it clear to the most careless attention. It is not here intended to convey the impression that individuals have never risen from the tables with money won; but it must be borne in mind that the money is not won from the bank, but from other individuals who are losers as a necessary corollary to the first individual's being a winner. Every player at either of the games established in the Homburg salons, is *betting odds on an even event*. The establishment of a maximum stake which a player cannot exceed, precludes the neutralization of the odds zero creates in favour of the bank. Were it possible to double the stake after each loss until the fluctuations of the game brought round the player's turn for success, capital would always counterbalance zero, but your power of staking being limited, added to the fact that at roulette the chances are thirty-seven to one against every single number on the table, two to one against every douze, and that the apparently even betting on the rouge or noir, pair or impair, passe or manque, is enormously modified against the player by the zero; it becomes evident that to sustain the hypothesis of a possibility of winning at the game is to maintain that abnormal conditions are the rule, and normal the exception. At Trente et Quarante the events betted upon are, in their essence, *even*, but the *refait* gives the bank the certainty of winning without the possibility of loss; for inasmuch as, of the four denominations or chances, *two* must lose, whenever a *refait* takes place, the two losing chances pay the bank, while the two that win merely regain their own stakes.

Homburg, then, possesses interesting features of its own: it offers the spectacle of the mine of weakness being sagaciously worked by avarice, and so we may dismiss the subject, with the brief verdict:—"Players deserve to lose—but the bank does not deserve to win!"

The aërial machine is once more spreading its wings. Lady of the dogs, Sir Dandy of the football, miserable pawnier of the diamond, farewell!

Recollections of Crime and Criminals in China.

WE have heard many stories of ingenious rogues in this country—of highwaymen whose horses had been shod the wrong way, so that they were believed to have taken a course directly opposed to that by which they really went; of pickpockets inventing instruments so ingenious, that they not only carried off from the makers all that was paid for the machine, but a great deal thereto in addition; of women in omnibuses with false glove-covered palms resting quietly on their knees, while the nimble fingers of the real hands were busied in levying contributions from the pockets of their fellow-passengers to the right and the left. But inventive and amusing among ourselves as are the displays of the multitudinous varieties of freebooters, sharpers, swindlers, cutpurses, footpads, and all the race, which, according to the record of the young practitioner of the Old Bailey,

Prigs what isn't his'n
An' ven they're cocht, is put in pris'n,

some of the acts of the Chinese performers may be placed in no disadvantageous contrast with the feats of the most distinguished heroes or heroines of our English gaols.

At Macao, on the ground-floor, a large table was spread for a late dinner. It was covered with many delicacies, and, as usual, there was an abundance of silver plate. The sun had gone down, the wax-candles were lighted, the windows left open for the benefit of the evening breeze. Suddenly a great number of bamboos were seen to enter on all sides from the verandahs, at the same moment every bougie was extinguished by a puff from the bamboo hollow tubes. The apartment was involved in darkness, a band of thieves jumped in, and before the astounded guests knew where they were, or what was doing, the whole of the plate was conveyed away, and a boat having, no doubt, been provided for the transport of the spoil either to a neighbouring island or to the mainland of China, no trace was ever found of the robbery or the robbers. The silver made its way very speedily to the melting-pot, and the successful invaders, who had their confederates around or about the house, would have no difficulty in finding participators and protectors among the *ladrones* who have given a name to the robber islands haunted from time immemorial by plunderers and pirates.

A gentleman was walking one day in the neighbourhood of Macao, which is one of the prettiest and healthiest places in Southern China, and has many attractions to invite wanderers. In one of its valleys grow the pitcher-plants—emerald urns suspended, filled with clear water, protected by prickly edged lids, as if for the service of fairy visitors; in another

are musical rocks, which on being struck, give forth a mysterious harmony. A group of Chinamen were seen in the distance, with whom a lounger was struggling. They mastered him, threw him on his back, two seized his arms, one sat upon his legs, a fourth was engaged in stuffing mud into his mouth, and a fifth in rifling his pockets. It is seldom that marauders are armed, or that they venture upon these depredations, unless they are much stronger than those they attack, nor will they attack any one who has the means of defence, and in the present case, when disturbed by the approach of a single individual, they all ran away.

But to a tale of deeper dye. The most daring deed of which I have any knowledge, was the assassination of Amaral, the Governor of Macao. He not only was the object of the hate and the opprobrium with which all conquerors are regarded, but he was especially marked out by popular indignation as having disturbed the manes of the dead by making a public road through one of the adjacent cemeteries, and requiring the friends and families of those whose coffins were likely to be disturbed, to remove them to some other resting-place. No greater outrage certainly could have been contemplated for insulting Chinese opinion. The associations of the living with the homes of the dead are stronger in China than in any part of the world. Nothing is deemed more important than the choice of the locality in which the mortal remains of relatives are to be deposited. The selection of an appropriate spot is sometimes delayed for years; family consultations take place, liberally paid geomancers are consulted, and corpses remain above ground and uninterred for years, until some auspicious site is selected, where the spirit of the departed may find repose and receive the oblations of future generations. The land is believed to be haunted by the unquiet ghosts of those who have either found no graves, or whose graves give no repose to the over-wearied corpse. When the tomb has been happily chosen, it is believed that the spirit sits unseen on the stone sepulchre, which has frequently the shape of a throne, and thence contemplates with serene enjoyment the scenery around, and welcomes the anniversary offerings which are brought to honour the domiciles of the dead. Amaral was probably little aware of the storm of passion he was sure to arouse, when—for carrying out a purpose of public utility—he determined to disregard the very dearest prejudices and the most solemn rites and observances of the people whom he governed. He forgot that his right to govern them was equally denied by the Chinese authorities and Chinese residents in the island, which indeed never had been formally ceded to the Portuguese. The intention of the governor to remove the tombstones which lay along the projected road having been made known, great murmurs arose among the population, and many representations were made as to the perils he would incur if he persevered in his scheme. But Amaral was one of the bravest of men, and had the meanest opinion of the courage of the Chinese. He had been a captain in the naval service of his native land. When a midshipman one of his arms was shot away in battle, and his exclamation has been honoured with frequent eulogiums—

“Never mind, I have still an arm left for the service of my country!” The walls of Macao and the adjacent villages were placarded with announcements that an enormous sum would be paid for the head of the barbarian chief who had desecrated the sacred domiciles of the departed. But Amaral turned a deaf ear to those who advised him to be cautious, and only just before the coming catastrophe, and close to the very spot where it occurred, and which was the scene of his daily rides—towards the gate which separates the Chinese from the Portuguese limits—he said laughingly to the writer, “There is nothing to fear; they offer more for my head than my whole body is worth!”

Three days after this conversation Amaral and his aide-de-camp started on their accustomed promenade on horseback. They had nearly reached the gate when three well-dressed Chinamen crossed the way, having in their hands branches of bamboos. They struck the governor, who fell from his horse, over which, single-handed, he had little power. The aide-de-camp, with incredible cowardice, galloped away and left his master in the hands of the assassins: at some distance an American gentleman witnessed all that passed. When Amaral lay on the ground one of the Chinamen with a huge knife severed his head from his body, and another cut off his only hand—the left hand—and they walked quickly away with their bloody trophies, leaving the mutilated body on the road. The character and all the circumstances of the act led to representations and remonstrances addressed to Commissioner Yeh, the Viceroy of Kwantung, and the pursuit and punishment of the murderers, and the restoration of the head and hand of the governor were insisted on by the diplomatic representatives of all the treaty powers. It was well known that the assassins were the representatives of public opinion, and the advanced instruments of public passion, and it was believed that they would be allowed to escape, and that they would, according to a common Chinese practice, be substituted by others innocent of the crime. But in this case it appeared the leader made that crime the subject of self-glorification, and expressed himself not repentant, but rejoicing in the deed he had done. The head, embedded in gypsum within a case employed for its preservation, and the hand, were restored to the Macao authorities, and buried with all honour in the Catholic cemetery. The leader on his way to execution clamorously boasted of the success of his act, and demanded not the sympathy but the approval and applause of the bystanders. The Cantonese erected a temple in his honour, and made a liberal provision for his family and their descendants.

This habit of giving pensions to the widows and children of those who are believed to have been the victims of unjust sentences is common in China. In cases of officials of the highest rank, whose administration has been unfortunate, suicide is a common occurrence, and the reports of ill-success are usually accompanied by a self-imposed sentence, and a request that punishment, even the punishment of death, may be the Imperial award. There are in the history of China many accounts of

censors, who being especially appointed to watch and criticize the conduct of the Emperor, had discharged their duty so boldly as to have brought down upon themselves banishment, and even death-punishments in aggravated forms. In the ancient annals such are mentioned with special honour. The severe judgments of the censors appear in the official Gazette of Peking, and during the late war were published the strongest animadversions on the unbecoming proceedings of the reigning monarch, to whose licentiousness the disasters of the empire and the successes of the foreign barbarians were openly attributed. He condescended to justify himself by averring that the censors had been misinformed, and that he was not the unworthy being they represented him to be, but he did not visit them with any penalties. He acknowledged that he had appealed in vain to the divinities, and having failed to propitiate them could not but confess his own demerits. Not very long ago, in the province of Kiangsoo, the despotic acts of one of the great mandarins led to popular tumults, and an elder of great literary reputation was called upon by the people to prepare a petition to the Emperor recounting the misdeeds of the high functionary, and imploring his removal. The petition was accompanied with the usual request that the petitioner might be becomingly punished for having ventured, unbidden, though prostrate, into the "sacred presence," and to ask the "sacred glance" to look, in its marvellous condescension, on the humble representation of a slave. By imperial mandate the grievance was redressed, the mandarin was disgraced, and a more popular magistrate appointed in his place. The additional prayer was granted, for the punishment of the ancient scribe—the representations, though true, were reproachful to the Government, and threw a slur upon the administration of the Son of Heaven—so he must be visited with the proper penal consequences—the nails were violently torn from the fingers of the hand which had written the petition; this was followed by the beheading of the writer. The grateful people were satisfied—they knew that the merits of him who was sacrificed for their sakes would secure for him an undoubted immortality in the Buddhistic heaven—an immediate absorption into the divinity—his name would be recorded in honourable and everlasting remembrance on the tablets of the ancestral temple, and a liberal pension was decreed to his family. The wrongs were righted, the deserving fitly rewarded, the Emperor's authority maintained, the opinion of the people had prevailed, and everything was as it ought to be.

Near the governor's house at Hong Kong was that of his aide-de-camp. It was built, as many of the houses are, with a long stone passage, on each side of which are the apartments, and at the end, close to a wall, was a large gong, employed, as they generally are, to give notice either of the arrival of guests, of the hour of meals, or for any other purpose which requires the attention of the servants. One night the silence was broken by the unusual noise of the gong—everybody was awakened, and it was discovered that housebreakers had made a hole through the wall, and that

the leader of the party pushing his head forward had his progress interrupted by the gong, whose echoes roused the whole community, and the whole party alarmed by the unexpected public announcement of their fraudulent arrival, fled—one of them was shot in the leg and was captured—the rest escaped covered by the darkness of the night.

At the time when large rewards were offered for the kidnapping of barbarians and the delivery of their heads to the Chinese authorities, the sum for persons of the lowest rank being 100 ounces (Taels) of silver, rising by rapid gradations to enormous sums for the higher functionaries, Alun, the Hong Kong baker, was the object of much indignation in England, as having compassed the poisoning by arsenic of more than 350 persons; but Alun was undoubtedly innocent; the perpetrators were probably two foremen of the bakery; and there is reason to believe the bribe paid for the monstrous scheme of murder was five hundred dollars, which was provided by a society at Canton who publicly advertised that they sought by subscriptions to get rid by any means of the "foreign devils," and who published the tariff of rewards to be paid according to the official position of the parties delivered, dead or alive, to the authorities appointed to receive them. Four or five heads were exposed on the walls of Canton, and placarded as being those of Englishmen. Some of them were certainly lascars, but there is some doubt whether any one of them was really kidnapped, as no individual was known to have disappeared from the colony, and it was believed that the heads had been separated from the corpses of those who had died a natural death and delivered to the mandarins for the sake of the proffered bribe. There were many attempts at incendiarism in the Colony, only one of which succeeded; several schemes of assassination, one a grand gunpowder plot for blowing up the cathedral when all the dignitaries were assembled for worship; others for individual murder from ambuscades, but in almost every case the projects were made known to the Government, or the parties concerned, and provided against by proper precautions. One characteristic scheme for carrying off the governor is worth commemorating. The Government House—the most prominent edifice in the Colony—is built on the side of a hill, overlooking one of the most beautiful harbours in the world, in which there is a safe anchorage extending for more than five miles between the island and the mainland opposite. In front of the building is an esplanade, where the sentinels on guard keep watch, parading to and fro; a rapid slope descends from the esplanade to the road below. There was an apartment at the extremity of the building where the governor was accustomed to sit when the family had retired to rest, and which was then the only lighted portion of the house. One night, or rather early one morning—it was very dark and stormy—the sentinel, an Indian sepoy, was pulled down by a sharp instrument which had entered the calf of his leg, and he saw the head of a Chinaman above the parapet who was followed by other men; he fell down in a pool of blood which flowed from the wound made by the iron hook by which it was purposed to drag him

down the declivity, but he had the presence of mind to fire, and though the shot did not hit any of the intruders, they fled, and the report of the musket brought others of the watch to the relief of the sentinel, who was seriously injured and confined to the hospital for some weeks. Such was his exasperation against the Chinese for what he called their trick and treachery that he declared he would avenge himself by murdering the first Chinaman he met, and there was some difficulty in obtaining from him a promise that he would not commit an act the punishment of which would be far more severe than anything he had suffered from the man who had endeavoured stealthily to pull him over the precipitous bank.

Dexterous as are our pickpockets in filching pocket-handkerchiefs, stealing purses, and practising other larcenies, those of Canton are far more bold and ingenious, and, strange to say, there is seldom any interference from passers-by for the assistance of the robbed, or the capture of the robber. A shopkeeper will not leave his shop to denounce a thief who is committing depredations at his very door, but will probably laugh at the cleverness of the impudent and successful vagabond, who, unmolested, carries off his prey. A single thief has been known to arrest a sedan-chair, and to rob the party conveyed within it, the bearers (they not being accomplices, but considering the matter as no concern of theirs) stopping and looking on while the nefarious deed was done. In one case, when a short-sighted man was being carried in his sedan, his spectacles were removed before his pockets were emptied, and the robbery took place in a long street where multitudes of persons were constantly passing. Murders were frequently committed in the boats at Hong Kong, in the presence of many spectators, who seldom or ever attempted to prevent the crimes, and who never denounced the criminals. It was necessary to publish a proclamation, declaring that the licence to trade or to ply for hire would be taken away from the boat-owners who, when they witnessed any violent outrage, did not come to the aid of the injured—did not report the fact to the police, or render, when called upon, their assistance for the detection and prevention of crime.

A few years ago a vessel arrived from California at Hong Kong. There was a Chinese boy on board, a favourite of the captain, who had given him the name of "Celestial." He enjoyed the full confidence of his master. He attended upon his person, and became acquainted with the fact that in the captain's desk a large sum of money was deposited in a concealed drawer. The secret was known only to the lad and his master. One day the captain found the money gone. Celestial had disappeared, and there seemed no reasonable doubt that he had taken the money and made off, as it was very easy for him to do, to the adjacent continent, where inquiry and pursuit would be equally vain. The conclusion was, indeed, so natural, that on reporting the matter to the police no hopes of redress could be given, and there was no ground for then believing that there had been any associates in the robbery, which was sufficiently explained by the absence of the lad. But some hours after-

wards it was discovered that several of the crew had been spending, in Hong Kong, far larger sums of money than they could have come by honestly, and that dollars abounded on board to an extent for which no satisfactory explanation could be given, and the police were instructed to proceed to the ship and to institute further inquiries. At the moment when the boat reached the side of the vessel, a corpse rose to the surface of the water; it was the body of Celestial, tied to an iron bar, under whose weight it had sunk when flung into the sea, but as corruption and inflation took place the diminished specific gravity of the corpse had been sufficient to bring it up from the bottom to the top, and the murdered boy appeared to accompany the officers of justice and to bring damning evidence of the foul crime which had been committed. Abundant testimony was obtained from the less criminal of the sailors, who had received a portion of the money but who had had no participation in the projected murder, the principal actors in which were proceeded against, and the evidence left not a shadow of a doubt as to their guilt. It appeared that the boy, bursting with his secret, communicated it to some of the crew, and was persuaded by them when the captain was on shore to steal the money from the secret drawer, of which they promised to give him a considerable portion when it should be distributed. Celestial got hold of the money and handed it over to his evil counsellors, by whom he was suddenly seized; an iron bar was fastened by a rope to his body, and it was thrown into the sea, and of course disappeared. The rising of the corpse, as has been described, filled the crew with terror, and their superstitious feelings were so worked upon by what seemed a miraculous intervention of God for the denunciation and punishment of murder, that every particular was given of the circumstances associated with the dreadful deed, even to the amount which each had received for the purchase of his silence. Three of the worst of the criminals were sentenced to death: two were Irishmen, probably convicts escaped from Australia, one of whom confessed that it was not the first murder he had committed; the third was a Breton, who, strange to say, had for his father confessor a priest who had been the *curé* in the very village in Brittany where he was born, and who had known him in his boyhood. The Frenchman was finally sentenced to imprisonment for life; the others were hanged. They showed that utter indifference and contempt for death, which is common in a country where life is deemed of so little value that an execution is a matter of small concern. The British mode of disposing of condemned criminals excited at first some curiosity from its novelty; and I had once brought to me a series of pictures painted by a Chinaman under sentence of death, on which he employed himself in prison till the time of his being led out to the scaffold. It was a case of murder, and the pictures represented all the fancied contortions of his body after the falling of the drop. I was informed that they were all painted in the merriest mood, and that he was very desirous of ascertaining from the turnkeys whether they resembled the living and would resemble the dying man.

A barbarous murder was committed, in open day, on a flight of steps in the populous part of Hong Kong, by a pedlar boy of only nine or ten years old on another pedlar boy of the same age, for the purpose of obtaining only a few *tchien*—five of which make a farthing—the murderer having informed himself beforehand that the murdered only possessed the miserable sum which the determination not to surrender cost him his life. How is a wise and humane legislature to deal with such offences and such offenders?

Among amusing modes of plunder in China is the fishing for fowls, the catching them with rod, line, and hook. A man will be sometimes seen sitting on the wall of a poultry-yard, bobbing his bait among the cocks and hens, and every now and then, after twisting its neck, conveying one away to his bag; and that being replenished, he will move off with a simplicity and serenity of countenance like the gravest of mandarins. I never remember witnessing a more self-composed expression of innocence than in the case of a man who had stolen my pocket-handkerchief even while he was concealing it under his jacket behind.

Some of the more daring exploits are the kidnapping of opulent men, who are sometimes carried off into the mountains, or concealed in obscure places until a large sum is obtained for their ransom. A rich shopkeeper in New China Street—well known to all visitors in Canton as the locality where *curios* (Anglo-Chinese for ‘curiosities’) are bought, and most of the costly articles supplied for foreign demand—was conveyed away to the hills and detained until he paid an extravagant price for his liberation. When the rebels were in Shanghai they managed to seize one of the bankers of the city, and extorted from him enormous sums by roasting him before a fire, when in his agony he signed the money orders which his cashier felt it his duty to pay in order to save his master’s life. The roastings were frequently renewed in consequence of the success of the experiment.

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Dante.

DANTE was born in Florence on the 14th May, 1265. On the 14th May, 1865, Italy, for the first time, celebrated the anniversary of his birth, acclaiming him the precursor of her resurrection, while the latest descendants of the Florentines who so illtreated him sought how best to atone for the injustice of their ancestors. The attitude of the statue erected in the Piazza of Santa Croce does not certainly impress one with the idea of an appeased spirit. The scornful gesture of the exile, his eye fixed on Florence, reminds us of the writer of the letter of the 31st March, 1311, headed, "Dante Alighieri, Florentine, unjustly exiled, to the infamous Florentines who dwell in the city," containing the following sentence:—"O vainest among Tuscans, by nature and by custom stolid. O miserable descendants of the Fiesolans! O modern Carthaginian barbarians!"

If report speak truly, it was the line—

O servile Italy, of woe the home!

that inspired the sculptor Pazzi's hand; and the apostrophe comes not amiss from Dante's lips at a moment when the national sentiment is offended by the negotiations entered into between the Pope and the Italian Government. Dante, who digs a deep narrow red-hot hole in hell, and thrusts down, headforemost, one on the top of the other, the successors of St. Peter—Dante, who sorrowfully exclaims, "Ah, Constantine! how many ills were caused, not by thy conversion, but by that dower which from thee the first rich Father took"—Dante, who represents St. Peter as losing patience in the serene spheres of Paradise, and while the heavens were eclipsed, even as when Christ suffered on the cross, venting his magnanimous ire in the following invective:—"Those who usurp my place, my place, my place, which, in the presence of God's Son, is void, have made a sewer of my cemetery. . . . The bride of Christ was not fed with my blood, with that of Linus and of Cletus, that she might serve to purchase gold. . . . It was not our intention that a portion of the Christian people should be seated on the right hand of our successors and a portion on the left; nor that the Keys which were committed to me should serve as signs on the banners of those who combat the baptized; nor that I should stand as signet seal for venal, lying privileges, the thought of which often makes me blush and burn. In the dress of shepherds we see rapacious wolves roaming over all the pastures. O arm of God, why tarriest thou still?"—Dante, could he now behold the most

splendid conquests of progress sacrificed to the Pope, would assuredly repeat—

O servile Italy, of woe the home!

The ceaseless war he waged against the Papacy in his poem, and in his minor works, throughout the chequered vicissitudes of his life, forms one of his chief titles to the gratitude of Italians; but it was ignored by the directors of the sixth centenary festival, who honoured in him the father and prophet of Italian unity.

Dante having exhausted his researches into all the dialects of the peninsula, created at one stroke the Italian language, brought it forth as Michel Angelo his statues, sculpturing them at once in the marble. The Italian of the *Divine Comedy*, the *Vita Nuova*, the *Convito*, is, with very slight modifications, the same as we write and speak at the present day; and it is worthy of note that, as long as Dante remained the inspirer and guide of Italian intellect, Italy never knew an inglorious moment; whereas she has rapidly declined every time that, forgetting Dante, she has taken Petrarch as her model. Creator of her language and founder of her literature, Dante gave to Italy both word and thought, added intellectual individuality to the individuality of race and soil, and hence is fairly entitled to be regarded as the author of the possibility of an Italian nation, of an Italian autonomy; but neither as prophet nor father of the present Italian unity, of which he never dreamed. As a politician, in common with the jurisconsults of his time, he shared the belief in the resurrection of the Roman empire, desired the predominance of Rome over Italy, and of Italy over the rest of the world, under a German emperor.

Born in the thirteenth century, he died in the early part of the fourteenth, and his grand individuality is reflected in the errors, defects, passions, and virtues of his time. He stands at the head of modern civilization as Homer stands at the head of ancient. He did much to recall men's minds to real and terrestrial life at a time when they were exclusively absorbed in celestial contemplations, influenced by their fears that the end of the world, predicted for centuries, was at hand.

A mundane atmosphere encircles even the saints and blessed ones of Dante's Paradise; the damned in Hell do not envy the elect in the celestial kingdom; they yearn for the bright sunshine, for natural beauties, for busy life, for cities; they are interested in passing events, in the fate of their party;* all the passions that stirred them in life have power to stir them still. Society, thanks to Dante, emerged from the chrysalis in which the prolific barbarity of the Middle Ages had enveloped it, to soar on the wings of the genius of a new European epoch.

* Take, for instance, the reply of Farinata, the Ghibelline, when Dante, in answer to his taunt "that he had twice banished his ancestors from Florence," reminded him that "they returned each time," "an art which the Ghibellines had not learnt." Up to his waist in hottest fire "that magnanimous one changed not his look, nor stirred his neck, nor bent his form, but continued: *The fact that they learned that art so badly torments me more than this fiery bed.*"

He has had hundreds of commentators and interpreters, each explaining his meaning as best suited their own peculiar views. Benvenuto da Imola and Landino regard him as an artificer of symbols and allegories; Rossetti as a freemason and a Luther; Foscolo as a Ghibelline and apostolic missionary; Balbo as a Guelph; Ozanam as an orthodox Roman Catholic; Mazzini as the Paul of Italian unity; the Florentines and the deputies of the Italian communes present at the sixth centenary festival, as a Count Cavour. Exclusively he was none of these. He was the man of his age, the grandest individuality of the heroic times of individualism. He loved tenderly, he hated implacably, he was relentless in his vengeance; he thought much, wrought much, and suffered more than all. The plaster cast handed down to us as the one taken from his austere face after death impresses us with the feeling that that face never smiled. This cast, bequeathed by the Marquis Torrigiani to the Royal Gallery of Florence, has, by the Commission chosen to examine the remains of Dante found in Ravenna, been compared with the skull; and, in their report to the Minister of Public Instruction, they pronounce the frontal, eye, and nasal bones to be identical with the impression left in the plaster, making due allowance for the flesh that covered them.

In his youth, an hour of hope, of happiness, of illusion, was vouch-safed to him in the love of Beatrice Portinari, in the friendship of Guido Cavalcanti, and Lapo Gianni. "Who wished to know love," he writes, "might have learned it by watching the tremor of my eyes. . . . When she appeared in any place, no enemy remained to me; indeed, a thrill of charity pervaded my whole frame, causing me to forgive all who had offended me; and to whoever asked me any question, my only answer was love—my countenance clothed with humility."

Guido, I would that Lapo, thou, and I
Were taken as by magic,
And put on board a vessel, which, in all winds,
Sped by our wills alone, should ride the sea,
So that nor adverse winds nor tempests
Could place a hindrance in our path.
So that, guided ever by one will,
Our wish to stay together should increase.
I would the good magician sent us also
Both Monna Vanna* and Monna Bice,†
And her we find at number thirty,‡
And there of love conversing ever,
I would that each of them should be content,
As I believe that we ourselves should be.

But grief soon overtook him, and remained for ever at his side. "Leaving the world, I went to solitary places to bathe the earth with bitterest tears, and then, when this weeping had somewhat relieved me, I retired to my chamber, that there I might moan unheard . . . And I returned

* Guido Cavalcanti's lady-love.

† Beatrice Portinari.

‡ Lagia, the lady-love of Lapo Gianni, to whom Dante, in his *Serventesse*, written in honour of sixty beautiful women, gives No. 30; as to Beatrice, No. 9.

to the chamber of tears. . . . O sweetest death, come thou to me, and do not be unkind ! Come to me now, for much I desire thee ! Thou seest that I already wear thy hue."

Close on the heels of this grief of the poet's imagination followed the crueler grief of reality. He saw his Bice the bride of another, and later learned that she was dead. He was then four-and-twenty, and in the second part of the *New Life*, which he wrote four years later, we find symptoms of a brain distraught. He tells his desolation in lines full of tender reverence, whose beauty was never equalled by Petrarch :—" In tears of grief and sighs of agony, I wear my heart out when I am alone, so that if any saw me they must grieve : and what my life has been since my love went to the *new age*, no living tongue can tell."

In the last paragraph of the *New Life* he writes—" On this a marvellous vision appeared to me, and in it I saw things which decided me to speak no more of that blessed one until such time as I might speak of her more worthily. And to attain to this I study as much as I can, as she well knows. So that if it be the good pleasure of Him by whom all things live that my life for a few years shall endure, I hope to speak of her as no woman has ever yet been spoken of."

This marvellous vision was the first conception of the *Divina Commedia*. His passion for the beautiful Portinari was merged in intellectual love ; the terrestrial Venus, as Socrates says, was transformed into the celestial Venus. Beatrice—symbol henceforward of wisdom, virtue, philosophy, theology, the idol of his whole life—sends Virgil to lead him out of the " dark wood " in which he had lost his way, and to guide him in his pilgrimage through Hell ; then, acclaimed by angels, who strew flowers on her path, she herself descends to accompany him in his visit to Paradise. " Already I beheld, at break of day, the Eastern sky rose-tinted, and the Western heaven dressed in a sweet serenity, and the sun's face arose so veiled that, tempered by the mists, the eye could long gaze upon it. So, in a cloud of flowers, strewn by hands angelic, falling within and round the car and on the snow-white veil with olive crowned, a woman, 'neath a mantle green, appeared, and robed in hues of living flame." The mantle green, the veil white, the dress flame-coloured—here we have the national Italian tricolour of to-day.

The poet now gives us to understand that Beatrice's heart had not always remained deaf to the beatings of his own. She, telling the angels who encircled her of his subsequent infidelities, timidly confessed her love :—" Once I sustained him with my glance, on him my eyes in girlhood turned, to lead him by my side in the right path."

Love-sorrows were now followed by political storms. Born a patrician, of a race so ancient that he claimed to have Roman blood in his veins, proud of his nobility and a bitter scorner—

Of every peasant who a partisan becomes,
he stood by the Guelphic banner of his ancestors, and puts into the mouth

of Farinata degli Uberti, the chief of the Ghibellines, sentenced with the other leaders, Lamberti, Ezzelino, Buoso, Federigo II., to Hell, the following phrase—" Thy ancestors were fiercely hostile to me, my ancestors, and party; hence I twice dispersed them."

The Ghibelline party first arose in Florence in 1215, and was vanquished in 1267, when it was for the second time banished from the city. The fugitives, aided by the inhabitants of Aretino, risked their last chance at the famous battle of Campaldino (1289), where they were defeated by the Florentine Guelphs, Dante distinguishing himself in the cavalry van of the victors. The Ghibelline star had already set in Italy when the dynasty of Anjou arose on the ruins of the Swabian throne in Naples, and their last hopes were dead when the Guelphs, during one of their periodical reformations of the republican constitution, decreed that the government should devolve on six Priors. Now the Ghibellines were originally feudal lords, who had been compelled by the inhabitants of Florence to abandon their castles, and adapt themselves to citizen life; they shunned the people, and were partisans of the Emperor. In order to become Priors they were forced to enrol themselves in some trade, to change name and crest, to become as one of the people. The unity of the triumphant Guelphs lasted but a short time under the supreme guardianship of the Pope. In 1300 it was broken up into two factions—the Bianchi or moderate Guelphs, the Neri or Neoguelphs. All these parties, whether Guelphs and Ghibellines, or Bianchi and Neri, were composed of ancient nobles, or nobles recently created, or rich merchants, who alternately strove for and attained the upper hand. The actual people had no part in these societies, and from time to time drove out first one, then the other, from the city. Later they, too, appeared on the battle-field, and the political struggle became a social struggle.

On the 15th of June, 1301, Dante, who had enrolled himself as a druggist, was elected Prior, which office lasted two months. His lofty ideas and expansive views forbade him to ascend to supreme power only to further the narrow aims of the Bianchi faction, to which he belonged; he sought to promote the general interests of the community by counselling measures of strict justice. When the rival parties broke out into open violence, he proposed to send the chiefs of both Bianchi and Neri to the frontier, and his proposal was accepted by the other Priors. Both parties were equally offended, and his impartiality was the origin of his own irreparable misfortunes. This equilibrium was regarded by all as Utopian. Guelphs and Ghibellines, Bianchi and Neri, could not, it was believed, exist at the same time in the same city. One must triumph, while death or exile must be the portion of the others. Yet they were not divided by any very different series of ideas—it was lust of power that separated them. The idea of right was not counterpoised by the correlative idea of duty. Right with them meant wrath enthroned. The Neri, who were partisans of France, invoked the intervention of Charles de Valois, brother of Philip the Beau, who was on his way to

conquer Naples. In order to avert this calamity from Florence, Dante was sent on a mission to Pope Boniface VIII. The Pope buoyed him up with fair words and ample promises, but was at the same time engaged in a conspiracy with the Neri and Charles d'Anjou, who entered Florence. Dante, still absent as ambassador, was fined five thousand small florins (*in libris florenorum parvorum*), sentenced to two years of banishment, excluded for life from all public offices (*nullo tempore possit habere aliquid officium vel benefitium pro communi vel a communi Florentiae*), and in default of payment within three days, to have all his property seized and destroyed. His judges accounted for this sentence by affirming that it had reached the ears of the Podesta (*ex eo quod ad aures nostras et curia nostre notitia, fama publica referente, pervenit*), that Dante Alighieri was a usurer, guilty of illicit gains, of iniquitous extortions of money and substance, and of sequestrating public documents. Thus the vengeance of his adversaries, not content with sending him into poverty and exile, sought also to defame him. The fine he disdained to pay, and on the 10th March was sentenced to perpetual banishment, and, if taken, to be burnt alive (*si in fortiam dicti communis pervenerit, igne comburetur sic quod moriatur*). One of his earliest biographers, Leonardo Aretino, writes: "They produced a document to substantiate their accusations, and this document, which I have seen, is still in the Pretorian Palace; but in my opinion it is extremely suspicious, and I do not hesitate to pronounce it fictitious."

Banished and calumniated again and again, in company with his fellow-exiles he tried to effect his return by means of conspiracies and expeditions, but all failed, and he separated from his co-conspirators an embittered and disappointed man. Wrath and thirst for vengeance transformed the man, the citizen, the poet. The author of the *Vita Nuova*, "to whom no enemy remained," "whose frame was pervaded by a thrill of charity, which led him to pardon all who had offended him," became the author of the *Inferno*. The sweet singer of Beatrice is transmuted into the terrible painter of Farinata and Ugolino; the timid lover who, at the sight of Bice, "felt an exquisite tremor in his bosom," now drags with inexorable hand the past and present generations down into the depths of hell, "into the whirlwind that is never still," "into the hailstorm of fire," into the "eternal ice of Antenora." Here he deposits all his enemies, all who were hostile to him on earth—men, peoples, cities—in no gentle fashion either, as he himself tells us. "Then I seized him by his after-scalp and cried, Either thou dost name thyself, or here I leave thee not a single hair."

He seems to assume the office and authority of God; accuses, judges, condemns, creates the places and assigns the degrees of punishment, and writes on the gates of the awful prison—"Abandon every hope, O ye who enter." The sentences passed by Dante are indelible in a quite other sense than that pronounced and signed by Cante de' Gabrielli da Gubbio, Podesta of Florence. Hearty thanks are due to this Cante de' Gabrielli, and to the

Neri faction, for having torn Dante from the pleasures of his native city, and from his home; since, had not his genius been sharpened by sorrow, his soul tempered by misfortune, his brain stimulated by a sense of injustice, his heart stirred by persecution, never would he have produced his immortal tragedy.

His exile lasted eighteen years. In canto xvii. of *Paradise* his ancestor Cacciaguidi foretells his fate:—

Thou shalt prove how salt will taste
The strangers' bread; how hard it is
To ascend and descend by other people's stairs.

In the *Convito* he tells us:—"Wheresoever this tongue is spoken I have wandered, almost begging; showing, against my will, the wounds of fate, which are often unjustly imputed as faults to the sufferers. Verily I have been as a vessel without sails or helm, driven hither and thither to ports and straits and shores by adverse winds, which rise from sad poverty, and thus I appeared in the eyes of many who, owing perhaps to a certain fame acquired, had formed a very different idea of me; hence not only was my person depreciated, but the work I had accomplished and that yet unfinished were less esteemed."

Exile, the injustice endured, and thirst for revenge modified Dante's political opinions materially. He ceased to be a Guelph without becoming a Ghibelline—the change being far more radical, since he substituted a belief in monarchy for his republican creed. Ghibellinism did not exclude a republican form of government—the republics of Pisa and Arezzo were Ghibelline; whereas Dante wrote a treatise on monarchy, in which he affirms that its existence is necessary to the happiness of mankind, points to the Roman people as its fountain head, to the King of the Romans, *i. e.* the Emperor, as its representative, and traces its immediate origin from God without the Pope's intervention. As a unitarian and partisan of centralization he hurled anathemas at all autonomous cities and provinces; calls Florence "an accursed ditch," Pisa "the refuse of cities," Lucca "a nest of vipers," Genoa "indecent and full of every vice," Pistoja "fit only to be reduced to ashes," Treviso "full of traitors," Romagna "full of poisonous serpents and of bodies animated by demons," Puglia "of cowardly soldiers," Citaja "of madmen," Bologna "of panders," Arezzo "of dogs," Lombardy "fit for such as cannot for very shame consort with good men, and where not three educated men can be found;" and in a letter he speaks of Venice in the following terms:—"Truly a wretched and ill-mannered mob, insolently oppressed, shamefully governed, and cruelly taxed: how can I, O Signore, express the gross ignorance of these grave, venerable fathers? When I found myself in the presence of this grey-bearded and aged assembly, I naturally wished to fulfil my mission and communicate your message in the Latin tongue. Hardly had I pronounced my exordium when they sent to beg me either to seek an interpreter or to speak in another language. Half-astonished, half-indignant (I can hardly tell which sentiment

predominated), I began to say something in that tongue which I first lisped in swaddling-clothes, and even this scarcely sounded more natural or familiar to their ears than Latin. This ought not to surprise us, seeing that they know not how to speak Italian, because, descended from Grecian and Dalmatian ancestors, their only inheritance, brought to this most fertile soil, is made up of the lowest and most indecent habits, together with the dregs of every vice."

Allowing himself to be carried away by his new monarchical, imperial, and centralizing convictions, he writes, in the *Convito*, his greatest prose work:—"In order to bring human life to perfection, imperial authority was devised; this is the guide and rule of all our operations, so that if one wish to describe the office of the emperor by a symbol, one might say that he is the rider of human will, and it is sufficiently evident that the horse often wanders wild without his rider, especially in this wretched Italy, which has been left without any sort of guidance." During the first years of his exile, impelled by his yearning to return to Florence, and by his burning thirst for vengeance on the Neri, he sought partisans among the Ghibelline chiefs, and visited certain persons who were for waging war on Florence. But, depressed by one failure after another, his spirit was tempered to more peaceful aspirations and vaster designs. Then it was that he dreamed of a German Cæsar in Rome, the concentration of the petty Italian republics and principalities in one United Italy, and of the unity of the human race as of a circle round a centre. Thus he set his hopes first on Albert of Austria, and afterwards far more firmly on Henry of Luxemburg, to whom he wrote letters, and whom he urged to enter Florence in person. Now it is that the serenity of the Utopian prevails over the ire of the partisan. "Rejoice to-day, O Italy," he writes, "for thy spouse, who is the joy of the age and the glory of thy people, the most clement Henry hastens to thy bridal: dry thy tears, O fairest one, and hide the signs of grief; since he is nigh who will liberate thee from prison and free thee from the wicked. Forgive! forgive to-day, O beloved ones, who have suffered injuries, even as I have suffered, so that the chosen Shepherd may know thee for lambs of his fold. For although, by divine permission, he holds in his hand the rod of temporal punishment, yet, because he resembles Him from whom, as from one root, branches the power of Peter and of Cæsar, he chastises his flock, yet far more gladly shows mercy unto them."

Invective is succeeded by idyll; reconciliation, forgiveness, oblivion, take the place of vengeance. Gradually as the tempestuous politician calms down, the poet also grows calmer: he sings—"To ride o'er gentler waves, the slight bark of my genius spreads her sails, leaving behind the cruel sea." He had already reached the mount of Purgatory, "where the human spirit becomes worthy of ascending to Heaven." Even the new edict of death issued against him and against his children by his fellow-citizens, did not distract him. Yet once again he returned to the consideration of mundane things, when Florence offered a pardon to the exiles, on the

condition of "paying a certain sum, of wearing a degrading mitre on their heads, and, wax-taper in hand, with abject and contrite mien, marching in procession behind the car of the Mint, and thus entering into the church of S. Giovanni, there to expiate their crimes by an offering to the saint." Writing to a friend in Florence, whom he calls *Pater*, he says,— "From your letters, received in the spirit of reverence and affection which they merit, I have gathered with thoughtfulness and gratitude all your anxiety for my return home; and I have been all the more touched by them because it is so rare for exiles to meet with friends. I now reply to their contents, and if I cannot do that which the pusillanimity of some would wish, I affectionately pray that a careful examination of my motives may precede your sentence. The letters of your and my nephews, and of other friends, inform me that, in virtue of the decree concerning the exiles recently issued in Florence, if I choose to pay a certain sum of money, and suffer the shame of a fine, I may obtain absolution and return at once. In these propositions there are, to speak plainly, two things, O Pater, which are ridiculous and ill-advised. I apply the word ill-advised to those who informed me of them, since you in your wiser and more prudent letter do not once refer to them.

"Is this, then, the glorious path by which Dante Alighieri is recalled to his country after the sufferings of an exile which has lasted almost fifteen years? Is this the reward of his innocence clear to all? This the result of the sweat and toil endured in his studies? Far from the man who has made Philosophy his friend be such baseness; worthy only of a degraded heart to consent, even as a certain Ciolo, and other men of ill-fame, to be ransomed like a prisoner! Far be it from the man, the apostle of justice—the man insulted and offended—to pay a tribute to his offenders, even as though they were his benefactors.

"This is not the road by which to return to our country, O my father; but if you or others find a path which will not stain Dante's honour, he will accept it immediately. But if there be no honourable path to Florence, he will never enter into Florence. What! can I not behold the sun and stars from every corner of the earth? Can I not meditate on sweetest truth from every region under heaven, if I do not by my own act strip myself of every glory—ay, render myself ignominious to the people and city of Florence? Bread at least will not be wanting."

So, following in the footsteps of his Beatrice, he consecrated the last four years of his life to the canticles of *Paradise*. Then reclining his weary head on the immortal book, with, perhaps, a last sigh for Florence—for him "empty of charity and void of love," yet never by him forgotten—he died.

Towards the end of May, just after the centenary festival, the bones of Dante were discovered at a short distance from the tomb where, since 1321, they were supposed to lie, and now await from Italy a worthy sepulchre.

During the May festival an interesting and valuable collection of the rarest MSS. and editions of the poem was exhibited in the hall of the Palazzo Pretorio, the oldest public palace of Florence, recently restored to its primitive form, almost as it existed in Alighieri's time. The place was worthy of the collection of 204 editions of the *Divine Comedy*, 32 translations in various tongues and dialects, 12 separate commentaries, 28 editions of the minor works, 65 copies of different illustrations of the Life and Works of Dante, 48 manuscripts of the *Divine Comedy*, with the date, belonging to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries ; 132 of the same epoch without date, and hundreds of manuscript commentaries and documents relating to Dante, to his age, or to eminent personages mentioned in the poem. Space forbids us touching on more than a very few specimens of this collection.

The first editions of the *Comedy* were printed in Fuligno in 1472, by Giovanni Numeister, and in that same year other three were issued in Jesi, Mantua, and Naples. The British Museum possesses a copy of each, and the only existing copy of the Neapolitan edition, abstracted from the Magliabecchiana library in Florence. Lord Vernon, the famous Dantofilo, published them all at his own expense (in one volume) in facsimile ; and the book, edited by Panizzi, figures in the Pretorian exposition. Five copies of the Fuligno edition are to be seen there belonging to the Magliabecchiana, Laurenziana, and Palatina libraries of Florence, to Count Orfni of Fuligno, and to the Marquis Trivulzio of Milan. The edition is in small folio, the pages are not numbered.

Comparing these copies with the two in the British Museum, it is evident two editions must have been printed at the same time, since in some we find errors which are corrected in others. For instance, in the Laurenziana (*Inferno*, canto iii. line 68) we read, " *Poscia ch'io ebbi alcun riconosciuto*," and in all the others *Pocia*. Again, at line 63, in the Laurenziana and Magliabecchiana, " *A Dio spiacente ed a nemici sui*," and in all the others *dispiacente*. Panizzi remarks that in the copy belonging to the Duc d'Aumale in line 58 occurs *recognoscuito* instead of *recognosciuto*, and elsewhere *cogliochi* instead of *con gli occhi*, *arrivae* instead of *alla riva*, and several other errors only to be found in the Palatina copy.

The Jesi edition is extremely rare, and was printed four months after that of Fuligno by Federico Veronese. " *Explicit : Liber Dantis impressus a Magistro Federico Veronese M.CCCC.LXXII. quintodecimo a Lendas Augusti. In folio piccolo.*" The copy exhibited belongs to the Trivulzian library in Milan; it is complete and in good condition, the frontispiece only missing. In the copy of the British Museum several pages are missing; six have been copied by Mr. Harris from one belonging to Lord Spencer, and from another incomplete copy pages 214-16 have been taken; still three are missing altogether. The Mantuan edition contests with that of Fuligno the rights of primogeniture. " *Dantis Aligerii poetae Florentini Inferni capitulum incipit*," stands at the begin-

ning; and at the end, "Magister Georgius et magister Paulus, Teutonici, hoc opus Mantuae impresserunt, adiuvante Columbino Veronensi." Two copies belonging to the national library of Naples and to the Trivulzian are exhibited. The second, rich in arabesques and miniatures, contains a dedication from Colombini, the printer, to Nuvoloni, a Mantuan gentleman, which is wanting in that of Naples. Neither of these copies have been seen by Panizzi, who, in the preface to Lord Vernon's volume, says that he only knows of those belonging to the British Museum, to the Royal Society, and to Lord Spencer.

Only in the Fuligno edition do we find the arguments placed at the head of each canto, and according to Professor Quirico Viani this one adheres closer than any of the old editions to the best texts.

Typographically speaking, the Jesi edition is the best, but less correct than any other; the most correct of all is that of Mantua. According to Panizzi, the value of these first editions "consists in their pointing out how the pronunciation has been altered, in giving us the etymology of certain words, and the primary signification of many others."

After these earliest editions figure the Neapolitan of 1477, in folio, sent by the library of the Neapolitan University, printed by Mattia Morano; that of Vindelino da Spira, sent by the Ricciardana library, with comments by Jacopo della Lana, Bolognese, 1477, erroneously attributed to Benvenuto da Imola, at the commencement of which is printed, for the first time, Boccaccio's Life of Dante; the Milanese edition, sent by the Brera Library, printed on parchment, in 1478; and especially the Florentine edition in folio, printed by Lorenzo della Magna in 1481, with the commentaries of Cristoforo Landini, sent by the Magliabecchiana. The copy exhibited is a splendid volume presented by Landini to the Signoria of Florence, in return for which gift the learned commentator received a tower of the Castello di Borgo, in Colleria, his birthplace in Casentino.

The edition of Della Magna is the first printed in Florence; Landini's, the only one printed on parchment. In that of the Imperial Library in Paris several pages are missing, many are only printed on one side, and nearly all are defective. The poem is preceded by Landini's comments and by a Life of Dante, and by considerations on the excellence of the Florentines in arts and letters, on the site, form, and personages of the *Inferno*, on the stature of Giants and of Lucifer. The miniatures which adorn the Proemio, the three canticles (and especially the first), are wrought with a delicacy and good taste worthy of Perugino. The binding is in the olden style, the corners bound with silver clasps representing the years of the Florentine Republic, and with two medals in the centre of the cover, on which are engraved the figure of Hercules, the seal of the Republic, and Marzocco holding in his claws the banner of the Giglio.

The Venetian edition of Quarenghi, 1497, contains marginal notes by Tassoni. The Venetian edition of Ferrari, 1555, is the first in which the title of *Divina Commedia* appears on the frontispiece, while

the Venetian edition of the *Convito*, 1521, is copiously annotated by Torquato Tasso.

Among the modern editions of the comedy three stand unrivalled; i.e., the three printed expressly for the festival destined to commemorate the six-hundredth anniversary of the poet's birth—that of Bologna under the superintendence of Professor Scarabelli, with commentaries by Jacopo della Lana—that of Mantua by Pietro Rossi, 1865, a typographical chef-d'œuvre from every point of view, and the Cassinese of 1864, which is the first edition printed from the famous text of the Comedy preserved in Montecassino.

This edition is ornamented with photographic facsimiles of the text, and of other writings of the earliest ages existing in the Cassinese archives—which are useful for comparison. It seems to have been commenced during the first half of the thirteenth century; the writing, the orthography, and certain comments in the margin, all conduce to this supposition. The text is written on vellum, which was in use as early as the tenth century, and especially towards the first half of the fourteenth. Its darkish tint, its weight, quality, and form are identical with a legal document of 1310, which exists in the Cassinese archives. The writing of the marginal comments seems the same as that of some manuscript sermons written in April, 1326, by Ambrogio di Castello. It differs from the rough Longobard writing, with its long irregular strokes, and resembles the square auncial writing of the Romans. None of the *i*'s are dotted, the dot being first used towards the end of the fourteenth century; and the words flow into each other, as is the case with all the writings of that epoch. Two historical proofs also determine its date. The commentator, speaking of the death of Thomas Aquinas, poisoned by Charles d'Anjou, says, "that his corpse lies at Fassanova," where we know that it was first buried, though in 1368 it was transported to Tolosa. Again, in his explanations of line 36 of canto xxxiii. *Purgatory*—

Che vendetta di Dio non teme zuppe,

he refers to a Florentine superstition still extant in his day, which led the relations of a murdered man to guard the tomb lest the murderers should come mangiare la zuppa, or to feast thereon. We know from Benvenuto da Imola, and from Dante's son, who flourished in 1386, that this practice had then fallen into disuse.

The palæographic observations on the Cassinese MSS. apply equally to the magnificent MSS. of the Palatine library of Florence, exhibited in the Bargello, which, for antiquity, bears the palm from all the rest, since it is anterior to 1333, hence anterior to Landini's of 1336, to the Trivulziana of 1337, and to the Cassinese, whose date can only be fixed by induction, even open to error.

The one in the Palatina is probably the MSS. belonging to Luca Martini in 1329, seen by Baccio Valori in 1515, and thought to be lost. It is evidently anterior to 1333, because, unlike the others on record, it is

written in two volumes, and the verses each occupy two lines. Its date is also determined by an historical proof. The commentator, who is also the writer of the MSS., in order to explain the following lines—

E se non fosse che in sul passo d'Arno,
Rimase ancor di lui (Marte) alcuna vista (his statue),
(*Inferno*, canto xiii. lines 145-46)—

writes—"Dopo il decto mutamento neente meno una statua di Marte rimase in sullo vecchio Ponte de la decta cittade, la quale statua dirovinoe nel fiume d'Arno, e per molti anni in quello stette, in fra 'l quale molte schonfitte ricevette dai vicini la decta cittade. Poi dopo anni molti fue ritrovata e dritta al decto Ponte, et per consiglio d'alchuno astrologho edirecta la cittade in melliori provedimenti che chonsiglio que quella statua si ritrovasse et riponesesi nel luogho *dov' ella è anchora*." Now Villani (*Cronaca*, lib. xi. cap. 1) bears witness that in the flood of 1333 the statue of Mars was again hurled into the Arno, and lost for ever.

The Landiano MSS. of Piacenza is also very valuable. It bears the written date of 1336, and hence stands second to the Palatina. Its priority is further confirmed by the fact that Antonio Delfino was commissioned to write it by Beccaria Beecheria of Pavia, who was Podesta of Genoa, sub anno Domini Mill^o ccc.xxxxvi. We read this déclaration at the head of the canticle of *Paradise*. Comparing the Landiano manuscript with the Cominiana edition of the *Divine Comedy*, 1727, we meet with 306 variations, many of which are valuable as corrections; take, for instance, the 59th line of the fifth canto of *Hell*,

Che succedette a Nino e fù sua sposa.

The Landiano MSS. runs *che succe dette*, and means "who gave suck." And in truth Semiramide, of whom the poet speaks, was both mother and wife of Nino, and for this is condemned to the circle of lust. The *succedette* of Cominiana and the rest is an absurdity.

We will only add that not a single page of Dante's own writing remains to us; not even his signature. From Leonardo Aretino we know that his writing was *magra, lunga, e molto corretta*. It is strange to say that in the 178 manuscripts exhibited in the Bargello, and in the 236 editions—if we except Foscolo's, printed in London, 1842, by Pietro Rolandi—none of the volumes bear the title placed by Dante at the head of the poem in his dedication of *Paradise* to *Cane della Scala*.

Incipit comedia
Dantis Allagherii,
Florentini natione,
Non moribus.

We have not even his picture. The pretended picture of Dante attributed by Vasari to Giotto, and discovered in 1840 by Antonio Marini, is not by Giotto at all. Vasari took the idea from Filippo Villani, who, according to Vasari, wrote that Giotto "also painted a portrait of himself by means of a mirror, and of his contemporary Dante Alighieri, the poet, in a picture of a public festival in the chapel of the

Podesta on the wall (*in muro*)," whereas what Villani did write was, "on the altar table (*sulla tavola dell' altare*)."¹ Of this *tavola* we know nothing later than 1382, and on the wall, by the side of the pretended portrait of Dante, we find no portrait of Giotto. Moreover, we know that the roof of the Pretorian Palace, or palace of the Podesta, was destroyed by fire in 1332, and replaced by the present vaulted roofs. The fire and the masons would have destroyed the fresco on the wall if painted before 1332. Again, a document exists, which informs us that the walls of the palace were painted in 1337, when Varano was Podesta, and Giotto had then been dead six months, and Dante sixteen years; besides, the portrait in the chapel is said to have been painted when he was fifteen and wrote the sonnet to Guido and Lapo.

No portrait remains to us save the one given by Boccaccio:—"This poet of ours was of middle stature, and when he arrived at mature age he stooped slightly; his step was firm and stately; he wore the simplest dress suited to his age; his face was long, his nose aquiline, his eyes large rather than small, his jaws large, his under lip protruding beyond the upper, his complexion clear, his hair and beard massive, black, and curly; his countenance ever melancholy and thoughtful." But even this is not a perfect portrait, because in his Latin *Egloga*, in reply to his friend Giovanni de Virgilio Bolognese, who invited him to Bologna to receive the poet's crown, he says himself that his hair was fair. "Were it not better that I crown and cover not under the triumphal wreath the hair which on the Arno's banks was fair, but which, if I return to my native land, will then be grey?"

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